

Lebanese president suffers mild heart attack, condition stable

BEIRUT (AP) — Lebanese President Elias Hrawi has suffered a mild heart attack but is in a stable condition, hospital officials said Wednesday. A statement issued by Sacre Coeur Hospital in suburban Beirut said the life of the 73-year-old statesman was not in danger. "He is recuperating steadily," the statement said. Hrawi is due to step down as president on Nov. 24. Hrawi fell ill at the presidential palace in Baabda on Tuesday night and was taken to the hospital for medical tests. He spent the night in intensive care, with his wife Mona at his bedside, presidential aides said. The presidential palace said in a statement that Hrawi's condition "does not warrant any worry." Media reports said the president would return to his residence within 48 hours. The heart attack came less than two weeks before he hands over to president-elect Emile Lahoud at the end of an extended nine years in office.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية. الراي.

Regent meets U.S. commerce secretary

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Wednesday met with U.S. Secretary of Commerce William Daley who arrived in Amman earlier in the day on a three-day visit to the Kingdom. Prince Hassan and Daley discussed means of invigorating Jordan-U.S. economic and commercial ties. The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Faysal Tarawneh, Royal Court Chief Jawad Anani, Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Mohammad Saleh Hourani and Jordan's Ambassador to the U.S. Marwan Muasher as well as U.S. Ambassador in Amman William Burns.

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Iraq refuses to budge as U.N. evacuates, U.S. primed to attack

Agencies

MOST U.N. personnel were evacuated from Baghdad on Wednesday as the United States warned it could launch air strikes without warning for Iraq's defiance of the Security Council over weapons inspections. But Iraq refused to back down in the escalating crisis and Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz told U.N. Special Envoy Prakash Shah that Baghdad still insisted on moves to lift the eight-year-old oil embargo.

"His response was what they have already given me; they will not be able to desist from their decision unless the Security Council takes some action in regard of the sanctions," Shah said after meeting Aziz. Meanwhile, President Saddam Hussein's cabinet discussed measures to confront any U.S. military strike, the official INA news agency said.

"The Iraqi cabinet considered deeply and carefully the possibility of an American-Zionist strike that the U.S. administration has threatened against our people and our homeland without any mandate or Security Council resolution," INA said.

The cabinet, chaired by Saddam, reviewed "measures taken by the different ministries to meet any eventuality," INA said.

The Iraqi ministers also paid tribute to the "commitment and disposition of the Iraqi people to confront American aggression and to bring about the downfall of its conspiracy," the agency added.

In New York, a U.N. spokesman announced that the Security Council would meet later Wednesday and that Secretary General Kofi Annan was cutting short a North

African trip and will be back in New York on Thursday.

Western diplomats said meanwhile that some Security Council members were unhappy that the chairman of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) on Iraqi disarmament had decided to pull out inspectors from Baghdad without consulting the council.

UNSCOM chief Richard Butler's spokesman Ewen Buchanan said the Australian diplomat decided after discussions with U.S. officials to withdraw all 103 arms inspectors from Baghdad, amid fears for their safety in case of U.S. military strikes. He described the move as a "precautionary measure."

The sudden evacuation of 103 UNSCOM staff and members of the International Atomic Energy Agency served to reinforce U.S. and British warnings that time was running out for Iraq to reverse its Oct. 31 decision to break with UNSCOM.

Their pullout was part of a mass evacuation of some 300 U.N. personnel, mostly working for the U.N. humanitarian programme, to ensure their safety. Only essential staff were being left behind, said U.N. spokesman Eric Falt.

Hans von Sponeck, coordinator of the U.N. humanitarian programme, remained in Baghdad and the programme designed to ease the hardships of sanctions imposed on Iraq for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait was to continue.

Also staying behind was Shah, leaving a door open for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to reach a diplomatic solution.

A first group of around 150 U.N. humanitarian workers left the Iraqi capital in a convoy of buses headed for Jordan, a few hours after the arms



United Nations personnel prepare to leave the U.N. compound in Baghdad on Wednesday. The U.N. announced earlier in the day that it was withdrawing its 'non-essential' staff from Iraq in what appeared to be a large withdrawal of personnel (AP photo)

experts. A smaller number were to follow on Thursday.

On the military front, the chairman of the U.S. joint chiefs of staff warned that the United States would issue no ultimatums before launching any air or missile strikes against Iraq.

"We feel that there is no requirement for an ultimatum to be given," General Henry Shelton said on ABC television. "The ball is in Saddam's court."

U.S. defence officials said the Pentagon is ready to deploy more than 60 U.S. bombers and fighters and two

armoured battalions to the Gulf, sending back forces which were massed in the Gulf during a previous crisis. But Shelton made clear Washington could strike without warning with the forces it now has in the Gulf: an aircraft carrier, eight warships capable of firing Tomahawk cruise missiles,

and 173 combat aircraft. Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, meanwhile, warned only that the use of force would destroy years of hard diplomatic work in Iraq and "complicate the situation in the region."

(Continued on page 3)

Tarawneh: U.S. strike more likely

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Faysal Tarawneh Wednesday warned that a U.S. military strike against Iraq seems to be increasingly likely and urged Baghdad to resume cooperation with the U.N. to avert a military confrontation. Petra news agency reported.

Speaking upon return to Amman after a 24-hour visit to Saudi Arabia, the prime minister said: "We have warned Iraq that ceasing cooperation with the U.N. Special Commission is very serious and attempts to defuse the crisis could be running late."

The prime minister spoke hours after the U.N. began pulling out all but essential staff from Iraq in what was seen as a withdrawal ahead of a U.S. and British military strike.

"Jordan urges Iraq to rescind its decision because it has no choice but to cooperate with the inspectors," Tarawneh said noting that Jordan wanted to see a diplomatic solution to the standoff. A strike would exacerbate the suffering of the Iraqi people whose economy has been devastated by the U.N. sanctions imposed after Baghdad's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the prime minister said.

Tension in the Gulf escalated with the arrival of another U.S. aircraft carrier and the departure of the U.N. inspectors from Iraq, the prime minister pointed out.

"When we in Jordan warn about the situation we talk about its repercussions on the whole region in general and Jordan in particular," the prime

minister said, noting that Iraq has been asking for a comprehensive revision of the sanctions regime but later halted its call.

He said many parties at the U.N. Security Council are seeking to lift the sanctions and that should be taken into consideration by the Iraqis and the U.N. to avoid military confrontation and solve the crisis diplomatically.

Tarawneh said that Jordan will do all in its power through contacts with the various concerned parties so as to avert any adverse consequences on Jordan pointing out that he will hold a meeting of the defence council Thursday to review the situation.

The prime minister did not elaborate but Reuters quoted other officials as saying the government is planning to activate a contingency plan that deals with finding alternatives to Iraqi oil supplies and how to meet an expected influx of refugees from Iraq in the event of a strike on Jordan's neighbour.

Jordan receives all its daily requirements of 90,000 barrels of crude and fuel oil from Iraq under a special exemption deal from the U.N. embargo.

Asked about possible moves by Jordan or other Arab countries to defuse the crisis, the prime minister said: "My visit to Saudi Arabia was within the framework of the Kingdom's policy of seeking Arab solutions to the crisis."

(Continued on page 3)

With conditions and threats:

Israeli cabinet ratifies Wye River peace accord

TEL AVIV (AFP) — After two weeks of delay, the Israeli government ratified the Wye River peace accord on Wednesday, but only after attaching riders to the decision, including a threat to annex parts of the West Bank if the Palestinians fail to honour the agreement.

After more than six hours of debate, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that his cabinet had voted eight to four with five abstentions to ratify the land-for-peace agreement.

The cabinet also approved maps of the West Bank zones to be turned over to Palestinian control under the so-called Wye River Memorandum.

"We took our decision while respecting three principles — security, reciprocity and a determination to maintain the land of greater Israel," Netanyahu told a press conference. "It is hard for us to give up even one square centimetre of land."

The agreement, which should have come into effect on Nov. 2, but has been held

up by Israeli demands for further security guarantees from the Palestinians, will now go to the full parliament next Monday and Tuesday for almost certain endorsement.

In addition to Netanyahu, those voting in favour of the agreement included his hard-line Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, who had been expected to abstain.

Under the terms of the agreement signed in Washington on Oct. 23, Israel is to withdraw over three months from an additional 13 per cent of the West Bank in exchange for a series of Palestinian actions against anti-Israel activists.

The pullbacks were due to begin next Monday with Israel pulling fully out of seven per cent of the West Bank now under shared control with the Palestinians and transferring another two per cent of the territory now under its exclusive rule to shared control.

In all, the agreement will increase the West Bank area under exclusive or partial Palestinian control from 27

per cent to 40 per cent, in addition to the 60 per cent of the Gaza Strip ruled by Yasser Arafat's Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

The delay in Knesset ratification appeared certain to push back the start of the withdrawals by several days.

Netanyahu said the cabinet approval was linked to several stipulations and he issued a bellicose warning to the Palestinians.

"If there is the slightest deviation from the [Palestinians'] obligations, such as a unilateral declaration of independence, we reserve the right to annex security zones, areas near Jerusalem and Jewish settlements," Netanyahu said.

He also vowed to "continue strengthening Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip" and hinted that he would soon approve the construction of homes in a controversial new Jewish neighbourhood in occupied Arab east Jerusalem.

At the same time however Netanyahu said that in line with the Wye River agree-

ment, Israel would authorise the opening of the first Palestinian airport in Gaza "as of next week" and at the start of the week would begin releasing Palestinian prisoners "who do not have blood on their hands."

Another rider to the ratification vote was that the Palestinian National Council (PNC), the top Palestinian political body, must hold an "appropriate vote" to reaffirm the cancellation of anti-Israel clauses in the Palestinian covenant, he said.

The text of the Wye agreement makes no mention of such a vote, saying only that members of the PNC and other Palestinian bodies would "reaffirm" the cancellation of the offending clauses, presumably by acclamation.

A third Israeli stipulation stated that Israel will yield no more than one per cent of the West Bank in a further interim pullback required after the three-month staged withdrawals are completed.

Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat denounced the

conditions and threats attached to Israel's ratification.

"We call on the Israeli government not to use the language of conditions and threats because this is not within the framework of the agreement and any conditions outside the framework will be a violation of the accord," he told AFP.

"We are committed to what we signed in Wye River and we will implement the agreement word for word, not more not less," he said.

Netanyahu, whose government relies on support from hardline nationalist parties fiercely opposed to ceding more West Bank land to the Palestinians, had postponed or broken off cabinet debate on the agreement four times before finally holding Wednesday's vote.

Hundreds of Jewish settlers living in the West Bank and their supporters held a demonstration in Tel Aviv Wednesday night to voice their continuing opposition to the accord.

Anani confers with Israeli leaders

AMMAN (J.T.) — Royal Court Chief Jawad Anani on Wednesday held talks with Israeli leaders on bilateral relations and the latest developments in the region.

Anani, on a one-day visit to Israel, met with Israeli President Ezer Weizman, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Infrastructure Ariel Sharon. Jordan Television reported.

At his meeting with Netanyahu, Anani stressed the need for implementing the Wye River Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement signed in Washington recently.

Netanyahu stressed that his government was serious about the endorsement of the Wye River agreement, adding that his government's next focus will be the final status negotiations. The Israeli government approved the agreement later in the day.

Weizman phones King

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Wednesday received a telephone call from Israeli President Ezer Weizman who inquired about the King's health. Jordan Television reported. President Weizman wished the King continued good health, speedy recovery and safe return home.

Anani said His Majesty King Hussein has been making every possible effort to establish a regional peace so that the people of the region can live in peace on their national soil.

Anani reviewed with Sharon the future of the Jordanian-Israeli ties in the aftermath of the approval of the Wye agreement by the Israeli government.

The two sides also discussed trade and economic relations between Jordan and Israel and Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority.

They also agreed on facilitating the flow of commodities and increasing their volume.

Sharon will head an Israeli delegation to Jordan for a meeting with HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Prime Minister Faysal Tarawneh and senior Jordanian officials.

Anani was accompanied on the visit by Jordan's Ambassador to the U.S. Marwan Muasher and Jordan's Ambassador to Israel Omar Rifai.

Government denies it is considering general amnesty

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — The government Wednesday denied local media reports that it was planning to issue a general amnesty to pardon hundreds of convicted prisoners in observance of His Majesty King Hussein's 63rd birthday which falls on Nov. 14.

"This talk of a draft pardon law is inaccurate; it is not even on the agenda of tomorrow's (Cabinet) session," one senior government official told

the Jordan Times.

Local newspapers said on Wednesday the Council of Ministers would hold an extraordinary session on Thursday to endorse a draft pardon law prepared by the interior ministry.

One daily said the pardon would exclude prisoners convicted of premeditated murder, espionage, rape and "terrorist activities."

The Cabinet postponed its regular meeting on Monday to Thursday because Prime Minister

Faysal Tarawneh was on an official visit to Saudi Arabia.

However, some officials did not rule out prospects of a pardon to be issued by His Majesty King Hussein after he returns home from chemotherapy treatment in the U.S.

Officials said any draft pardon law is usually prepared and endorsed by the government in line with Royal directives.

In previous years, His Majesty has issued several general amnesties.

Israeli army arrests six Palestinians after two soldiers shot

HEBRON (AFP) — The Israeli army arrested six Palestinians on Wednesday in a village near the site where two Israeli soldiers were wounded in an ambush late the previous night, witnesses said.

Israeli troops and security agents arrested the six men as they conducted house-to-house searches in the village of Radub Khirbat in a hunt for suspects in the shooting, the witnesses said.

The village, which lies in a region under Israeli army control, was placed under a curfew during the hunt, which lasted several hours.

One soldier was seriously wounded and a second lightly hurt when gunmen in a passing car shot at their vehicle with automatic weapons.

The rear doors of the victims' white pick-up truck were riddled with bullets and the back and side windows were smashed.

The vehicle carried Israeli army licence plates but there was no immediate confirmation that the two wounded

were soldiers. Dozens of Israeli troops arrived on the scene within minutes and sealed off the area.

Soldiers said the attackers drove off towards the Palestinian-controlled sector of Hebron in the West Bank, out of the army's reach.

The truck was sitting in the middle of an undivided highway near a West Bank crossing which leads to Hebron. The Jewish settlement of Omiel is about 1.6 kilometres east of the junction.

The two victims, aged 21 and 23, were brought to Soroka Hospital in Beersheba. Hospital spokeswoman Batya Kuris said one man was in serious condition with a chest wound. The other had small fragments of glass in his head and his wounds were considered mild, she said.

Kuris said one of the wounded was a settler from Omiel and the other was from the Israeli coastal town of Netanya.

"We were sitting watching

the municipal election results on television when there were some very loud bursts of fire, it sounded like an entire clip of ammunition," Yehuda Glick, a resident of Omiel, told the radio.

The shooting occurred around 11:20 p.m. local time, just hours after the Israeli government announced it had received new assurances from the Palestinian National Authority that it would take necessary steps to fight Islamist groups.

Yilmaz under pressure to quit after allegations of mafia ties

Key coalition member demands resignation

ANKARA (R) — Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz's minority government stood in peril on Wednesday after a key powerbroker demanded he resign over a corruption scandal.

Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Deniz Baykal's dramatic call followed the late night television broadcast of taped accusations against the government by businessman Korkmaz Yigit. Hours earlier, Yigit had been detained by police for questioning about his role in a major bank sell-off.

"Yigit tape drops like a bomb," said the Yeni Yuzyl daily.

"Revenge tapes rock the government," screamed Sabah.

Yigit denied accusations he had worked with an alleged underworld boss to win the sell-off tender for Turk Ticaret Bankasi (Turkbank), insisting he was being urged on by figures at the "highest level in the state."

The Turkish stock market plunged 17.54 per cent by

early afternoon on the growing political uncertainty. Bond yields jumped 15 percentage points to 146-147 per cent.

Yilmaz was meeting with party officials at his home. A statement was expected later in the day from the prime minister.

Baykal's 55 deputies hold the balance of power in Turkey's parliament and have supported Yilmaz's fragile minority coalition over a number of votes. In recent months, however, that support has become less than wholehearted.

"Yilmaz shouldn't tire himself and Turkey any further... he must resign immediately," Baykal told reporters in parliament.

Yigit was detained on Tuesday by police investigating the Central Bank sell-off of Turkbank.

In a tape of a telephone conversation released by the CHP last month, Yigit is heard discussing the sell-off of Turkbank with suspected underworld boss Alaattin Cakici. Cakici offers his help in dis-

couraging other bids and winning the tender.

Yigit submitted the highest bid, but the sell-off was suspended after the release of the Cakici tape.

Yigit said in Tuesday's video: "I asked for no help from Cakici. Why should I ask for any help from Cakici when there is support coming from the highest level in the state saying 'buy the bank and go into the media'?" Cakici is in jail in France for travelling on false papers.

Arrested earlier this year on an Interpol warrant, he is wanted in Turkey on accusations of extortion and ordering killings.

"Yilmaz must resign as soon as possible, if necessary today," the leader of the main opposition Islamists was quoted by the Anatolian news agency as saying.

Ex-premier Tansu Ciller said: "One day he'll be taken away with his wrists in the handcuffs of justice."

A deputy from Yilmaz's Motherland Party asked what would follow if the govern-

ment were forced out. "This is a minority government. Those who want to overturn it can do so, but they take the consequences on themselves," Ulku Guney told reporters.

What was not clear was whether Yigit's accusations, primarily against Yilmaz and Minister of State for the Economy Gunes Taner, would gain credence, or if they would ultimately be dismissed as what one politician called "barred and revenge."

Yigit's rise in the Turkish business world, from beginnings in construction, was marked by moves to buy the popular Milliyet and Yeni Yuzyl newspapers and private television stations.

He has since withdrawn from the Milliyet deal and relinquished ownership of Yeni Yuzyl.

If Yilmaz falls ahead of polls set for April, Demirel should ask the head of the largest party to try to form a government.

This would be the Virtue Party so despised by the military.



TEACHERS' STRIKE IN LEBANON: Lebanese Minister of Education and Youth Jean Obeid is surrounded by public secondary school teachers at a sit-in Wednesday in Beirut. Lebanon's public secondary school teachers started an open-ended strike on Nov. 9 and vowed to continue striking until their demands for better pay were met (Reuters photo)

Algeria's El Watan daily appears after 24-day interruption

3 dailies still in 'debt' row

ALGIERS (R) — Algeria's most influential daily El Watan reappeared on Wednesday after it went unpublished for 24 days because of a debt row with government printing presses which its editors said was politically motivated.

It hit the newstands with a headline calling the reappearance a triumph and devoted four pages to coverage of the showdown with the authorities over the debt dispute.

Three other non-government newspapers, Al Khabar, Liberte and Le Quotidien d'Oran, also involved in the dispute, reappeared three days ago after paying their debts.

Le Matin, La Tribune and Le Soir d'Algerie have not reappeared as their editors still refuse to repay cash demanded by the government.

The editors of the seven non-government dailies had at first been united, alleging that the government had used the debt question as pretext to stifle freedom of the press and quash reports of corruption and malpractice by senior officials.

As the conflict went on some editors warned their newspapers could be pushed into bankruptcy unless they resumed publishing.

Officials at the printing presses on Sunday refused to print El Watan although it had paid back its debts a day earlier. The officials said four days were needed to check that the money received from the newspaper's editors matched the debt.

El Watan's editors said the delay was evidence that the debt row was politically driven.

"The falling out prompted the newspaper said in its front page headline, referring to support from readers, journalists, opposition politicians and human rights activists."

"The decision to suspend the dailies had been taken at the highest level of the government," El Watan said.

The government, which enjoys a monopoly over printing houses and paper imports, insisted the dispute was purely commercial.

El Watan and Le Matin gave prominent coverage to allegations by a former military intelligence official of brutality and graft involving President Liamine Zerrouk's top adviser and preferred successor Mohammed Betchine.

Betchine, who initially said the allegations were unproven, quit his job last month.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel says 'spies' did not snoop on Cyprus

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel said on Wednesday that two of its nationals detained by Cypriot police on suspicion of espionage had not been spying on Cyprus or working for Turkey. But a cryptic Foreign Ministry statement gave no clue to precisely what Udi Hargov, 37, and Igal Darnay, 49, were up to with listening equipment at a rented apartment in a sensitive military area on the Mediterranean island's southern coast. "Recent reports stating that Israel is engaged or had been engaged in spying for Turkey in Cyprus are baseless," the statement by ministry spokesman Aviv Shor-on said.

'Employees responsible for Egyptian crash'

CAIRO (AFP) — Three railway employees were blamed by a commission of inquiry on Wednesday for a train crash in Egypt's northern Delta last month that killed 48 people. The committee, made up of railroad and technical experts, said in a report that assistant conductor Hosni Mohammad Abdul Latif shut down the automatic breaking system after the train left Alexandria station Oct. 18, according to judicial officials. The train's chief conductor and 47 other people died in the disaster, which was initially blamed on a fare-dodging passenger.

Americans warned over Luxor anniversary

CAIRO (R) — The U.S. embassy has warned American citizens in Egypt to take extra care in case of attacks timed to coincide with the anniversary of last year's massacre of tourists in the southern resort of Luxor. "Bearing in mind that incidents like the one that occurred in Luxor could entail attempts to exercise violence on or around the same date, all American citizens in Egypt should exercise caution and review their personal security practices, especially at tourist facilities and in or around U.S. government buildings," said a message from the consulate issued on Monday.

Satellite receivers seized in Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian authorities have seized a lorry carrying satellite equipment under the guise of tuna fish, the official news agency IRNA reported on Wednesday. Police found 255 satellite receivers in the vehicle, although the driver's papers said the lorry was carrying "tuna fish," the news agency said, citing police officials. The Iranian government has banned satellite dishes in its drive to check the inroads of "decadent Western culture," but government agencies and politicians are allowed to use them for "research" purposes.

'U.S. could land troops in attack against Iraq'

CAIRO (AP) — The United States and Britain have planned a three-phase strike against Iraq that could involve deploying troops in the country, a leading Arabic newspaper quoted diplomats as saying.

After each phase of military action, the allies would present Iraq with a list of demands pending further strikes, the London based daily Al Hayat said in its Wednesday edition.

The diplomats did not specify the demands, but they would certainly include Iraq's reversing its Aug. 5 decision to freeze all cooperation with the U.N. inspectors charged with overseeing the elimination of Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction.

Al Hayat said the diplomats spoke on condition of anonymity from Amman, cit-

ing as the source of the plan briefings to Arab leaders by U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen during his tour of the Middle East last week.

U.S. officials have not specified what action they might take against Iraq. But Pentagon planners have prepared deployment orders that could put tens of thousands of U.S. ground troops, 100 more warplanes and additional ships into the Gulf should President Clinton order sustained attacks against the country.

The U.S. force in the Gulf is now about half the size it was in February during the most recent standoff over weapons inspections.

The report, leaked to Al Hayat, the Arab World's leading newspaper, could be a warning to Iraq that an attack

would not be merely a retaliatory strike but instead a sustained campaign.

The London-based newspaper did not say how Arab leaders viewed the reported plan, but publicly all Arab governments have called for a peaceful solution to the standoff.

There is widespread feeling in the Arab World that the sanctions imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait have inflicted too much suffering on ordinary Iraqis. The sanctions, which cover the sale of oil, have devastated the Iraqi economy.

Al Hayat outlined the following steps in the plan:

— In the first phase, U.S. and British jets would attack bases of the Iraqi Republican Guards for four days, the newspaper said. The guards are the elite of the Iraqi army and regarded as

the mainstay of President Saddam Hussein's government. The United States and Britain would then issue an ultimatum to the Baghdad government, Al Hayat reported.

— In the second stage, if Baghdad does not respond to demands, the American and British air forces would hit presidential palaces and Iraq's infrastructure, including the bridges that were destroyed in the 1991 Gulf war but repaired since. After the second phase, "a harsher list of demands" would be delivered to Iraq.

— Finally, if Baghdad did not respond satisfactorily, the U.S. and British forces would land troops in Iraq to attack "sensitive sites." America and Britain drew up the plan during the earlier crisis, it said.

Ultra-orthodox strengthen hold on Jerusalem

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Ultra-orthodox parties strengthened their position in Jerusalem's city government during this week's local elections, sparking fears among secular residents of a looming religious crackdown, according to results published Wednesday.

In Tuesday's vote, incumbent mayor Ehud Olmert, a secular member of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's nationalist Likud Party, easily won reelection with 60 per cent of the ballots.

But in the parallel race for the 31-member city council his list suffered a stinging defeat, notably at the hands of parties representing the city's large minority of ultra-orthodox Jews.

Olmert's Likud captured only three of the council seats, while three religious parties grabbed 13, making them by far the biggest bloc in the local government.

The ultra-orthodox Shas Party, champion of Sephardic Jews of North African and Middle Eastern origin, was the biggest win-

ner, taking five seats compared to only one in the previous council — apparently in part thanks to rabbi's promises that voters who back the party will go to heaven.

The main opposition Labour Party only garnered two seats while two left-wing anti-religious parties gained seven and various minor groups won four.

The Palestinian residents of Arab east Jerusalem for their part mostly boycotted the election so as not to legitimise Israel's occupation of their sector of the city.

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

Thursday Programmes

15:10 Cartoon — Superman

15:30 Drama — Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

16:00 D.C. — Life on the Digital Edge

17:00 French Programme

18:15 Sliders — Sparks

19:00 Le Journal

19:15 Science Magazine — L'Esprit De Colomb

19:30 News Headlines

19:35 Comedy — Family Matters

20:00 Doc. — Museums of the World

20:30 Drama — Dr. Quinn the Medicine Woman

21:10 Oprah Winfrey

22:00 News in English

22:30 Feature Film — "To My Daughter With Love"

23:59 Comedy — The Boys

00:30 End of T.X.

Friday Programmes

15:10 The Top Ten

16:30 Treasure Hunt

17:00 French film

18:15 The Simpsons

19:00 Le Journal

19:15 French Programme — Allo La Terre

19:30 News Headlines

19:35 Comedy — The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air

20:00 Cinema, Cinema

20:30 Babylon-5

21:10 Fat Cat, Thin Mice

22:00 News in English

22:30 The X-Files

23:10 The Halifax

23:59 End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:57 Fajr

05:57 (Sunrise) Dhuhr

11:20 Dhuhr

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

It will be sunny and fine, temperatures rising slightly, and winds light to variable. In

Aqaba, moderate weather conditions will prevail, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Amman 10/23

Aqaba 15/28

Deserts 09/24

Jordan Valley 14/29

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 19, Aqaba 25

Humidity readings: Amman

48 per cent, Aqaba 52 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 08/18

Jerash 12/23

Um Qays 11/22

Madaba 09/22

Petra 08/23

Dead Sea 09/24

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church

Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740

Assemblies of God Church Tel.

4632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4623366

Anglican Church Tel.

4624853/4624811

St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church

Tel. 4771751

Amman International Church

Tel. 5685897

German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 5688404

The Evangelical Local Church

in Amman Tel. 5811295

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter

Day Saints Tel. 4654932

St. John the Baptist at De la

Salle College Tel. 5661757

Church of the Annunciation

Tel. 4637440

Greek Orthodox Church Tel.

4646138

Church of Presentation, Sweifeh

Tel. 5920146

The Uniate Catholic Church

Tel. 4624757

The English-Language

Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190

Evangelical Free Church Tel.

4892679

The Baptist Church Tel.

4628052

The Armenian Catholic

Church Tel. 4771331

The Armenian Orthodox

Church Tel. 4775261

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Mazin Nthali 530435

Dr. Abdul Majid Al Shahr 4391405

Dr. Hani Al Ahmad 4394336

Dr. Fakhri Bshel 552223

AMMAN:

Firas Pharmacy 5661912

Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730

Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004

Ruka Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:

Dr. Issam Al Salih 021246858

Fou'ad Pharmacy 021275360

ZARQA:

Dr. Zahur Al Qadi 099060606

Palestine Pharmacy 09983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111

Civil Defence Department 5661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue

4630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777

Fire Brigade 4617101

Blood Bank 4775121

Highway Police 5343402

Traffic office 4896390

Public Security Dept. 4630321

Hotel Complaints 5605800

Price Complaints 5661176

Water & Sewage Complaints 4897467

Amman Municipality Complaints

4787111

Telephone Information (directory

assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 0132

Central Amman Telephone Repairs

4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101

Jordan Television 4773111

Radio Jordan 4774111

Water Authority 5680100

J. Electricity Authority 5815615

Electric Power Co. 4636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

'World Food Programme ready to extend assistance to Jordan'

AMMAN (Petra) — The executive director of the World Food Programme, Catherine Pertini, Wednesday said the organisation is ready to provide assistance to the Kingdom to help it improve the quality of life of Jordanians.

The present WFP programme for Jordan, which will continue until 2002, aims at expanding the area of land that can be reclaimed for agricultural use and enlarging forest and pasture areas, said Pertini.

She noted that the WFP will extend an estimated \$17 million in aid to Jordan over the next five years. The WFP is carrying out similar projects in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, she added.

The WFP's plans and programmes in Jordan have been very successful in the past, Pertini said, and efforts will continue over the next five years to provide further aid to farmers to help them increase food production.

The programme's office in Amman is also continuing to provide relief to poor women and children in Iraq through the oil-for-food programme as well as aid to residents in the Gaza Strip, she added.

According to Pertini, the WFP is now helping Indonesia and North Korea overcome food shortages and the effects of drought.

The WFP, which last year spent \$1.2 billion on aid in 194 developing countries, is expected to spend \$1.7 billion during 1998, Pertini added.

Later Wednesday, Pertini met with Agriculture Minister Mihem Khreisha, who presented her with the Jordanian Independence Medal of the Second Order, which was conferred upon her by HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, in recognition of her assistance to Jordan through the WFP.

Khreisha said that over the past three decades, the WFP has provided \$100 million in technical and food aid to the Kingdom and was instrumental in implementing a highlands development project in conjunction with the ministry to help farmers reclaim lands and develop farms to protect soil and water resources.



CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT MARKS KING'S BIRTHDAY: An employee of the Customs Department donates blood during a three-day blood donation campaign organised by the department. More than 100 of the department's employees donated blood in a campaign to mark His Majesty King Hussein's 63rd birthday (Petra photo)

'Government, consortium could reach gas deal by month's end'

By Amy Henderson

AMMAN — The head of an international consortium vying to secure a major gas transport deal yesterday said a deal with the government could be sealed by the end of this month.

Bruce Ericson, regional manager for Amoco, a leading American oil company, said a week of negotiations had so far been productive but stopped short of articulating the company's preconditions.

Amoco and a Belgian company, Tractebel, are negotiating to construct and operate a gas pipeline

beginning in Egypt and running underwater from Port Said to the Suez Canal and eastward to Aqaba. From Aqaba, the pipe would pass along the Desert Highway to the Shidieh phosphate mines, the Rashidieh cement factory and Al Hussein Thermal Power Station in Zarqa. The line would also feed a planned \$500 million independent power production plant at Samra, near Zarqa, bids for which close in late January, and would constitute the nucleus of an intra-regional gas transport grid.

The project, including both Egypt and Jordan, will

cost nearly \$1 billion and will have the potential to supply half the Kingdom's energy needs until the year 2006. If construction begins next year, Amoco-Tractebel contend that the pipeline could supply Aqaba with gas by 2001 and Amman by 2002.

The project should eventually supply neighbouring countries with gas, with an emphasis on the West Bank, Syria and Lebanon, and effectively replaces an earlier initiative by the American firm Enron to market Qatari liquefied natural gas in the region and to supply Jordan, Israel and the Pales-

tinian self-rule territories via a regasification and storage plant at Aqaba. The project, known as the Peace Pipeline, collapsed in the wake of stagnation of the peace process.

According to a Reuters report, Amoco has already discussed the option of selling gas to Israel with the Jewish state's electricity authority, but the utility "did not have a mandate to secure a deal." It quoted Egyptian authorities as saying that they did not believe Israel would have the infrastructure to receive imported gas for the next five to 10 years.

Seven alleged 'Reform and Challenge' members retract confessions at trial

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — Seven defendants standing trial at the State Security Court on charges of carrying out terrorist acts Tuesday retracted their previous confessions, claiming they were obtained under duress.

The seven, allegedly members of a 13-person group known as "Reform and Challenge," are

accused of possessing, transporting and manufacturing explosives with illicit intent, carrying out extremist attacks and belonging to an illegal organisation. Three of the 13, also standing trial, did not testify Wednesday, while three others are being tried in absentia.

During the three-hour court session, the seven pleaded not guilty to all

charges.

In written testimonies delivered to the court panel, the seven claimed that they were forced to make their confessions "because they were subjected to mental and physical duress."

The defendants told the court that they are opposed to any subversive attacks that could destabilise the country and pledged allegiance to His Majesty King

Hussein and the Kingdom.

According to the prosecution charge sheet, the group started forming in 1994 and attended religious lessons in their homes. They decided to form a group which they called "Reform and Challenge" in order to change the reality in Jordan.

In February 1998, the group decided to launch terrorist attacks against government, security and some

individuals' properties and bought material which they allegedly used to manufacture explosives.

The suspects were arrested in May following a number of attacks which left no one injured.

The court, presided over by Judge Yousef Faouri, adjourned the trial until Nov. 17 to hear the remaining three defendants' testimonies.

Jordanian-Egyptian committee meeting postponed until Dec. 10

AMMAN (Petra) — A meeting of the Higher Jordanian-Egyptian Joint Committee scheduled for Nov. 18 has been postponed until Dec. 10, an official said Wednesday.

Subair Amawi, head of the Economic Cooperation Department at the Ministry of Industry and Trade, said the two countries agreed on the postponement but did not elaborate. Amawi said that during the higher committee meeting in Amman, Jordan and Egypt will inaugurate the linkage of their national power networks and sign an agreement on free trade and other agreements and executive programmes that will enhance bilateral cooperation.

Amawi said the joint Jordanian-Egyptian preparatory committee will begin preparing for the higher committee meeting on Nov. 8.

The two sides are expected to conclude an agreement on a free trade zone

between Jordan and Egypt which will be effective until the year 2005, at which time all customs duties between the two sides will be eliminated.

According to the plan, customs duties will be phased out, starting with a 25 per cent reduction in 1999, continuing with 15 per cent reductions for three years and 10 per cent in each of the final three years.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade said the two sides have already prepared a unified list of goods that will be exempt from duties.

Also Wednesday, the ministry announced that the Higher Jordanian-Egyptian Joint Committee will meet in Amman on Dec. 15.

The three-day meeting, to be co-chaired by the two countries' ministers of trade, will coincide with the opening of an Iranian industrial fair in Amman displaying various Iranian national products.

Orphaned children's society to hold awareness march on Friday

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — The Friends of Orphaned Children Organisation will hold its first annual march at the University of Jordan on Friday as part of celebrations marking His Majesty King Hussein's 63rd birthday.

The two-hour event, organised in cooperation with the university's Faculty of Physical Education, aims at focusing public attention on orphans and disadvantaged children in Jordan, said the society's vice president, Naseem Madanat.

"This is an opportunity for disadvantaged children to get together with other children from private and public schools and to participate in public sports activities," Madanat told the Jordan Times.

Around 3,000 participants, including university as well as public and private school students, parents and teachers, are expected to take part in Friday's event, which is

sponsored mainly by the United Nations Population Fund. Tickets will be sold to adults for JD2 and to students for 500 fils.

A recent study carried out by the organisation on six of the country's 21 orphanages, including two that are foreign-run, showed they almost completely neglected sports and social activities.

In addition, the study said, such institutions over received any backing in these fields from welfare organisations in the country.

"It appears that orphans in Jordan have little, if any, social life, and within this context, they are deprived of an active and healthy life," said Valerie Ndaruzaniye, president of the society.

"Since health scientists assert the strong correlation between health risk factors and lack of activity, the organisation believes that physical sport activity today is the foundation for health and active living years in the future."

Statistics compiled by the General Union of Voluntary Societies in 1994 showed that a total of 1,161 children separated from their families did not receive any assistance from them, the government or voluntary societies.

"One of our organisation's objectives is to promote health protection through introducing new activities that focus on physical education and nutrition... to enable children to enjoy a healthier lifestyle," said Madanat.

He added that the society was considering plans to launch training courses on physical education and nutrition for staff working at orphanages.

The Friends of Orphaned Children Organisation, established in 1997, is a non-governmental humanitarian society which provides assistance through sports, social and cultural activities to groups and institutions caring for orphans and disadvantaged children.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Regent attends dialogue meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Wednesday took part in the final session of the Islamic-Christian dialogue meeting. The meeting was organised by the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilisation Research and the Orthodox Centre in Switzerland.

Prince Ali attends folkloric performance

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Prince Ali on Wednesday attended folkloric performances at Terra Sancta school theatre by Circassian students from Hamzeh Ben Al Hussein school to mark His Majesty King Hussein's 63rd birthday.

Princess Wijdan Ali opens exhibition

AMMAN (Petra) — Deputising for Her Majesty Queen Noor, Princess Wijdan Ali opened the Jordan River Design Fall exhibition in the presence of Princess Rania, JRD president. The exhibition includes handmade products from Bani Hamida as well as the Jordan Valley area. The exhibition, held at the JRD premises in Jabal Amman, will run through Nov. 30.

Minister signs message to King

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Education Fawzi Gharaibeh on Wednesday signed a message of loyalty to His Majesty King Hussein on the occasion of the Monarch's 63rd birthday. He said the ministry has started a campaign to collect signatures for the message from Jordan's 4,400 public and private schools.

Officials meet with Moroccan minister

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh on Wednesday met with Moroccan Acting Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Abdul Salam Zaned for talks on bilateral issues. During the meeting, the two ministers stressed that Jordanian-Moroccan relations are based on realistic vision regarding bilateral matters. Zaned also met with Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib and discussed joint cooperation. Also Wednesday, Zaned met with Minister of Industry and Trade Mohammad Saleh Hourani to discuss means of increasing the volume of trade and investments between Jordan and Morocco. The ministers also discussed exchanging expertise in the fields of agriculture, tourism, industry, education, energy, health and social work.

Austrian FM arrives today

AMMAN (Petra) — Austrian Foreign Minister Wolfgang Schüssel is expected to arrive in Amman today for a two-day official visit as part of a Middle East tour to discuss obstacles facing the peace process. Schüssel's tour will include the Palestinian National Authority areas, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Israel.

'Wye implementation would help trade'

AMMAN (Petra) — The implementation of the Wye River accord would help facilitate trade exchanges between Jordan and the Palestinian National Authority, an official said Wednesday. Subair Amawi, head of the Ministry of Industry and Trade's Economic Cooperation Department, said peace and stability would have a positive impact on trade ties between the two sides. She explained that minimising strict security measures would reflect positively on the flow of Jordanian goods to Palestine and facilitate the movement of businesspersons between the two sides.

Tarawneh chairs council meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh on Wednesday chaired a meeting of the Higher Education Council attended by HRH Prince Ghazi, the King's advisor for tribal affairs and chairman of the board of trustees of Balqa Applied University. The council formed an academic committee chaired by the president of Al al Bayt University, Mohammad Adnan Bakhit, and an administrative and financial committee. The council recommended that former Prime Minister Mudar Badran head the second committee. In a statement after the meeting, Higher Education Council Secretary General Ahmad Hisan said that all issues relating to the council will be referred to the newly established committees for discussion and follow up.

UJ president receives Brunei delegation

AMMAN (J.T.) — University of Jordan President Walid Maani met Wednesday with Brunei Ambassador to Jordan Datu Abdul Saman for talks on cooperation between the university and Brunei University, a university statement said.

What's going on

FILMS

* "The Story of Islamic Art" (with commentary in Arabic by Dr. Mazen Asfour) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Thursday at 5:30 p.m.
* "Sonata de Primavera" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman on Thursday at 5:00 p.m. (Tel. 4610858).

EXHIBITIONS

* Display of Jordan River Foundation (JRF) 1998 autumn/winter collection entitled "Falling Leaves" at the JRF showroom, Jabal Amman (Tel. 4613081), until Nov. 30.

* Crossroads of Civilisations: More Than 100 Years of German Archaeological Activities in Jordan" (sponsored by the German Protestant Institute in cooperation with Petra Store Preservation) at the Royal Cultural Centre, until Nov. 28.

* "Exhibition of Candles: Candles With Certain Properties" at Goethe-Institute, Jabal Amman, until Nov. 12.

* Exhibition of watercolours by Mukarram Haghondouga at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until Nov. 24.

* "Masterworks of the Spanish Contemporary Architecture and Presentation of Architecture Guide: Spain 1920 - 2000" at the University of Jordan, Faculty of Engineering, until Nov. 20.

* Paintings by Jordanian artist Mohammad Abu Aziz at the Freuch Cultural Centre, Jabal Amman, until Nov. 28.

* Exhibition of works by Palestinian artist Kamal Boullata entitled "Homage to Jerusalem," an exhibition of paintings by late Palestinian artist Zulfia Al Sa'di, an exhibition by Palestinian-American photographer Sa'id Nuseibah entitled "The Farthest Mosque" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until Nov. 12 (Tel. 4643251/2).

Iraq refuses to budge as U.N. evacuates

(Continued from page 1)

In another sign that Iraq was losing its traditional support, France also for the first time on Tuesday raised the prospect of military action.

In a previous evacuation, UNSCOM withdrew most of its Baghdad staff in November 1997 in solidarity with U.S. members of the Special Commission expelled on charges of spying. But all the inspectors were allowed back.

U.N. personnel were also evacuated from Baghdad during another showdown over inspections in February, but an 11th-hour deal which Amman brokered in Baghdad averted U.S. and British threats of military action.

This time, Baghdad insists on Security Council moves to lift the oil embargo, which is

linked to UNSCOM's work. Iraq argues it has disarmed and the time has come for the embargo to be lifted in line with U.N. resolution 687.

On the military front, the United States now has 13 U.S. warships in the Gulf led by the carrier USS Eisenhower, but the number could rise to more than 20.

A dozen F-117 Stealth fighters, a dozen B-52 bombers, several B-1 bombers and 36 F-15 and F-16 fighters were on a deployment order that defence officials said could be issued as early as Wednesday.

Already speeding to the Gulf was a second aircraft carrier battle group and amphibious assault ships carrying a contingent of Marines.

The Pentagon has laid plans for both a swift, short notice strike against Iraq using forces

already in the Gulf and a sustained air campaign that would require the deployment of additional U.S. forces.

As the crisis deepened, U.S. citizens were told Wednesday they may want to leave Israel and the Palestinian areas because of the growing tensions between the U.S. and Iraq.

The U.S. State Department has also authorised the departure of employees in non-essential positions, the advisory said. It was not clear whether employees of the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv and the consulate in Jerusalem were preparing to leave.

The advisory said that the United States has not ruled out any options in trying to get Iraq to comply with the inspections programme.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel, hit by Iraqi Scud missiles in the 1991 Gulf war, would take "precautions as necessary" in the latest U.S. showdown with Baghdad.

Asked about the latest Gulf crisis over U.N. weapons inspections, Netanyahu told reporters: "We're examining the situation and the various implications of what is developing and we'll take the precautions as necessary."

"Israel understands it has a great responsibility to take all the steps to defend itself and its citizens and we never fail to do so." A previous similar crisis in February spread panic through Israel. Tens of thousands of Israelis queued at distribution points for gas masks and took steps to seal safe rooms in their homes.

Jordan and Saudi Arabia are in full agreement about achieving this goal and about opening the way for a lasting settlement through final status negotiations, he added.

Tarawneh also expressed hope that the right atmosphere be created for the resumption of the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese negotiations to arrive at a comprehensive peace in the region.

Tarawneh: U.S. strike more likely

(Continued from page 1)

The prime minister said he delivered a message to King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and Crown Prince Abdullah from His Majesty King Hussein expressing the King's appreciation of the Saudi monarch's

wishes for King Hussein's speedy recovery.

Tarawneh said he discussed with the Saudi leadership issues of mutual concern and the resumption of the meetings of Joint Jordanian-Saudi Economic Committee.

He said Riyadh expressed appreciation of King Hussein's

role at the Wye Plantation talks that led to an Israeli-Palestinian accord.

Underlining the need for the accord to be implemented the prime minister said Israel ought to endorse the accord as soon as possible and be committed to the implementation of its timetable.

Tight security for Pinochet hearing

LONDON (AFP) — A tight security operation was in full swing Friday as a London court which normally deals with terrorist crimes prepared for the arrival of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet.

He was due at Belmarsh magistrates' court in south-east London at 2:08 p.m. (1400 GMT) for his first appearance in public since his arrest more than two months ago.

It follows the decision by Home Secretary Jack Straw Wednesday to allow Spain's request for his extradition to go ahead. The warrant alleges genocide, terrorism and torture during his 1973-1990 dictatorship.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Graham Parkinson was also to hear any application to vary Pinochet's bail conditions.

A date could also be set for a committal, or main extradition hearing, the first substantive stage in a process likely to stretch several months.

Pinochet, 83, was to be brought to Belmarsh under heavy police escort and expected to enter the court

via a side entrance.

The hearing had been due to take place at Bow Street magistrates' court in central London, but was moved for security reasons.

The top-security Belmarsh court has seen some of Britain's most notorious IRA terrorists and is connected to the neighbouring top-security prison by a tunnel.

By 8:30 a.m. more than 50 police officers were on duty near the building, checking every car arriving at the entrance and keeping the growing crowd of reporters and photographers behind metal barricades.

Drivers were searched before they could leave their cars inside the court precincts.

Officers led all journalists to a van where their bags and equipment were put through an X-ray machine. Police with dogs combed hushes and trees around the perimeter for suspect packages.

The number of journalists allowed into the court was restricted, with only 38 places available for a hearing that has attracted world

attention.

In the small, glass-panelled public gallery there is room for only a small number of Pinochet protesters and supporters, who were being allocated spaces equally. There was no room for other members of the public.

A small group of Pinochet supporters gathered outside at dawn. They draped banners over police crash barriers proclaiming "Viva Pinochet."

The first two anti-Pinochet protesters to arrive unfurled a banner showing painted silhouettes of people who had disappeared in Chile, asking: "Pinochet where are they?"

The two factions stood on opposite sides of the road with police officers between them.

Security was also tight around Pinochet's temporary home on an exclusive estate west of London, with about 30 police officers patrolling the area.

Police with metal detectors searched undergrowth within several hundred yards of his rented mansion while colleagues with sniffer dogs patrolled.

Dozens of U.S. airmen under investigation in alleged test scam

TOKYO (AP) — Some 40 U.S. airmen assigned to Yokota Air Base in Japan are under investigation on charges of cheating on promotion tests, an Air Force spokesman said Friday.

Six airmen have been charged and two have pleaded guilty at their courts-martial, said spokesman Maj. Stephen Cutter.

Air Force regulations forbid any discussion or note-sharing on the promotion tests, called the Weighted Airman Promotion, which make up a major part of the criteria used to promote airmen. The cheating charges are extremely serious in the Air Force, Cutter said.

Tech. Sgt. James Mills

pleaded innocent at his court-martial, which began Friday, Cutter said.

Wednesday, Staff Sgt. Douglas Ivey pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 15 days in jail and 15 days of hard labour.

"I have learned it only takes one bad decision to make or break an honourable career," Ivey was quoted as telling the court by the Pacific Stars and Stripes newspaper in its Friday's editions.

According to court testimony, Ivey agreed to be helped on preparing for the test and picked up notes another airman left in his car, the Stars and Stripes said.

Last month, Tech. Sgt.

Kevin Mitchell pleaded guilty to charges of sharing answers in a 1997 test and was sentenced to a month in jail and 45 days of hard labour and was demoted one rank.

Three other airmen are slated for courts-martial.

Prosecutor Capt. Won Lee was quoted by the Stars and Stripes as saying that the tests were so competitive that even a couple of points could mean as much as another candidate winning an achievement medal in a remote difficult place.

Lee urged stiff penalties to send "a message that winners never cheat and cheaters never win," the newspaper said.

Animal rights hunger striker back in prison

LONDON (AFP) — A jailed animal rights activist was back in prison on the 65th day of his hunger strike Friday after refusing food and treatment by hospital staff.

Prison officials said doctors had concluded there was "no clinical need" for Barry Horne, who is serving an 18-year jail term for a wave of firebomb attacks, to remain in hospital.

He launched his hunger strike in early October to protest the government's refusal to set up a Royal Commission on animal experiments. His condition was described as "serious but stable."

Horne, 46, was transferred late Thursday from York hospital in northern England, where he had been moved on Nov. 24, to York prison.

Hospital staff said he had refused permission to be fed or treated, could be equally well cared for at the prison medical centre, and that day-to-day running of the hospital was being seriously disrupted.

Police forces are said to be on alert amid fears his death could spark a wave of attacks by animal rights activists.

The prison

Horne had been refusing food since Oct. 6 but was taking fluids. He will continue to be monitored by the hospital.

A statement from the York health services trust which runs the hospital said Horne had no "irreversible conditions" because of his fast.

"At the express wish of Mr. Horne, the hospital was unable to feed or treat him, and it was concluded he could be looked after equally well in the prison medical centre," it added.

The trust's chief executive, Peter Kennedy, said it had an obligation to provide a safe and peaceful environment for its other patients as well, but last weekend it was forced to declare "a major security alert."

"This is not acceptable. The risk of some serious incident happening was too high."

The British government has insisted it will not bow to "blackmail," saying it was "out of the question" to set up a Royal Commission under

Babe bombed, but tots loving toys

LOS ANGELES (AP) — When that cute little pig got roasted at the box office, there were immediate concerns that toy stores would feel the heat.

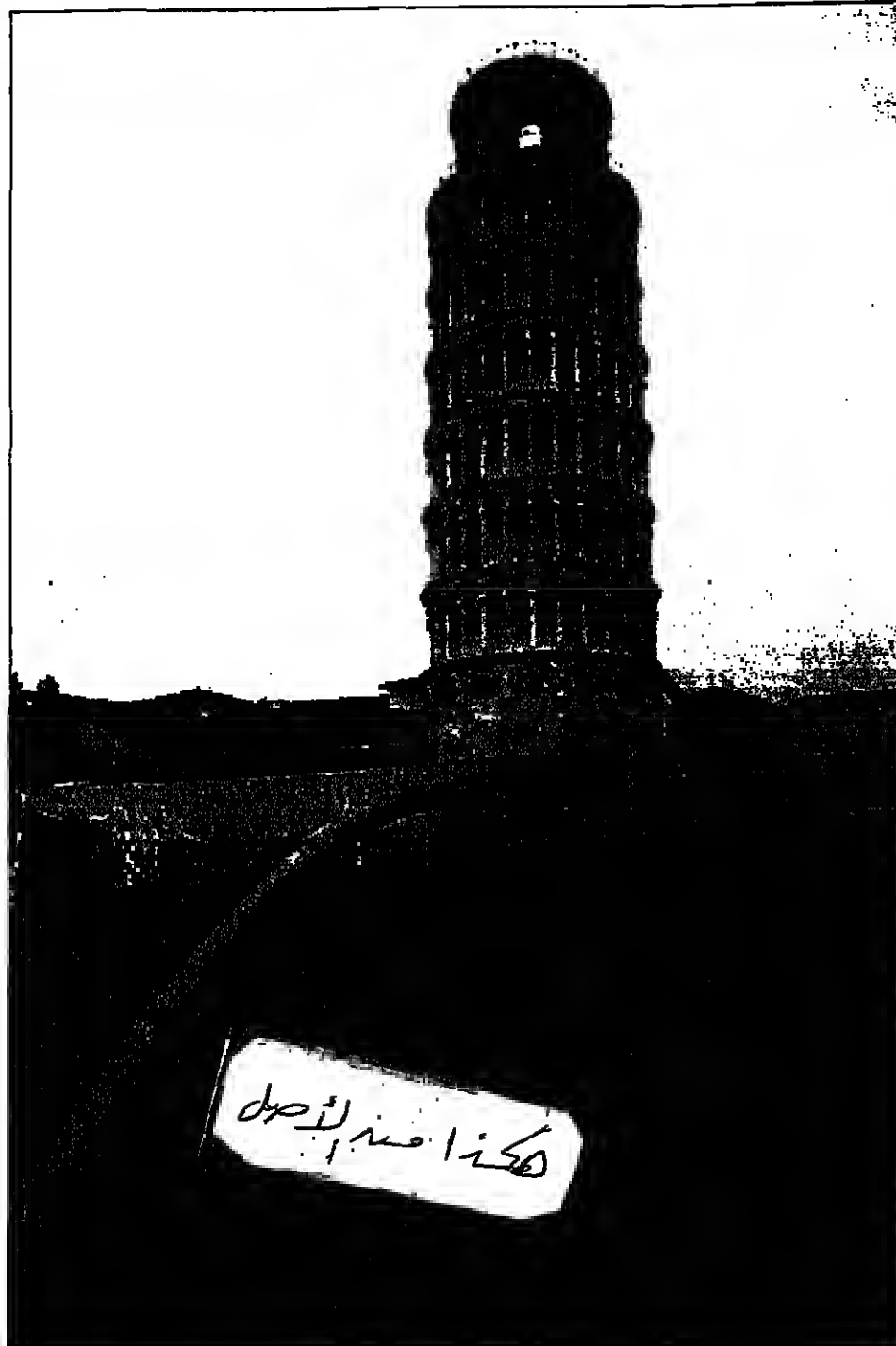
So far, plush toys based on the porker from "Babe: Pig in the City" are selling nicely in what is shaping up to be a better overall holiday season for movie toys than 1997.

But kids are really going wild for toys from "that other" holiday movie.

"It's going to be A Bug's Life Christmas. It's not going to be a Babe Christmas," said Jeffrey Thomson, an analyst for Hilliard Lyons.

Movie merchandising, like movie making, is a high-stakes business that doesn't always follow conventional wisdom and relies heavily on the whims of young — and often fickle — consumers.

"A Bug's Life," Disney's animated ant adventure, opened to huge business, at the



The two giant steel 'braces' are pictured in front of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. An expert commission has decided to give the green light to the latest scheme to straighten the Renaissance bell tower before undertaking excavation work designed to stabilise the tower and coax it fractionally back towards the vertical. Two 103 metre plastic-coated cables will be attached as a safety measure to keep the gracious white tower upright should excavation go horribly wrong (Reuters photo)

Rain delays work on plan to attach suspenders on Pisa tower

PISA, Italy (AP) — Heavy rain Friday delayed the start of the first steps in a plan to attach steel "suspenders" to the Leaning Tower, the latest strategy aimed at ensuring the monument doesn't topple over.

The engineer overseeing the work, Paolo Heiniger, said the two sets of 50-millimetre thick cables had been moved to the base of the 12th-century tower but could not be raised until the weather improved.

The project has run into a series of obstacles, delaying its start for months. Heiniger said he hoped the cables would be in place

by the end of the month.

The 103-metre long cables will be attached to anchors placed behind the tower and connected to the monument at a height of 26 metres.

Heiniger said the cables would serve as a "precaution," against any possible movement of the tower when work begins in 1999 to straighten it.

That plan calls for removal of some soil from underneath one side of the tower to allow it to settle better and lean one-half degree less. It now leans six degrees or four metres off the perpendicular. If the soil removal

appears to endanger stability, the "suspenders" would be pulled tight to hold up the tower.

Heiniger said the chances of this happening were minimal.

If all goes well, the braces will be removed.

The 55-metre high tower was closed to tourists in 1990 for fear it might topple over.

After the closure, several steel bands were placed around the tower to act as a kind of support girdle. There has been no estimate on when the public would be allowed to again make the dizzying climb up the tower steps.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Mongolian president meets Chinese counterpart in Beijing

BEIJING (AFP) — Mongolian President Natsagiin Bagabandi, on the first ever state visit to China, Friday met Chinese President Jiang Zemin, Xinhua reported. The two presidents were due to sign documents on relations into the 21st century, on cultural and scientific cooperation and on Chinese aid to Mongolia. Bagabandi, who is accompanied by a 30-member business delegation on the six-day visit, is also pushing trade ties with China and will visit the southern boom city of Shenzhen and the Inner Mongolian capital of Hohhot. Ever since the Mongol armies of Genghis Khan stormed over China's Great Wall in the 13th century and established the Yuan dynasty in Beijing, rivalry and fear has dominated relations. But on the eve of the millennium, Mongolia's new democratic leaders are keen to cement stable, cordial relations with Beijing. "The president has said time and again that we have no border or political disputes with China," said Bagabandi's spokesman. "If we look back all the time, it is quite difficult to look forward." Mongolia's acting Foreign Minister, R. Amarjargal, who accompanied Bagabandi on the trip, emphasised the importance of building ties between landlocked Mongolia, with its 2.4 million people and giant China. "Chinese businesses are leading the growth of new business in Mongolia," he said.

Prosecutor investigating whether city paid for mayor's gala

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal prosecutors have begun a criminal investigation into whether tens of thousands of dollars in public funds were used for a celebration for departing Mayor Marion Barry. The mayor and other officials have said repeatedly that no taxpayer money was used to fund the Oct. 22 gala honouring Barry's tenure as the city's leader. Thursday, the mayor's wife Cora Masters Barry, who supervised the planning of the gala, issued a statement saying that "at the appropriate time, an announcement about the details of the event will be made." Witnesses have told investigators about attempts to divert funds, forge contracts and shred documents in order to conceal the spending of municipal funds on the event. The Washington Post reported in its editions Friday, Monda Webb, a contractor who worked on the event, provided the newspaper with copies of check stubs showing that she received \$3,200 in city funds for her work on the programme.

Geneva court extends detention of former Ukrainian premier

GENEVA (AFP) — A Geneva court Friday extended by one month the detention of former Ukrainian Prime Minister Pavlo Lazarenko, arrested last week in Switzerland on money laundering charges, his lawyer said. The court took the step due to the risk of escape and collusion and because of an ongoing investigation, Paul Gully-Hart said. An immediate request for bail was denied but the lawyer said he would make another demand next week. The 45-year-old Ukrainian opposition leader was picked up by police in the western Swiss city of Basel nine days ago holding a Panamanian passport and was formally arrested in Geneva last Friday. Geneva public prosecutor Bernard Bertossa had been pressing for the maximum detention period, which is three months, renewable. The most important thing is that he is able to resume his political responsibilities, Gully-Hart said earlier. Lazarenko was premier from May 1996 to July 1997, when he was ousted by current President Leonid Koushna who accused him of corruption and misuse. Leader of the centrist Hromada party, he is a candidate for the upcoming presidential elections in October. In Kiev, supporters have mounted protests against what they insist is a "political plot" by the ruling powers in the run-up to the election. The Geneva judge Laurent Kasper-Ansermet, who said that relatively large sums have been blocked in Switzerland in the affair, arrived in Ukraine Monday to investigate the money laundering charges.

Alleged Australian mail bomber sent to jail for mental assessment

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — The man accused of waging a nationwide letter-bombing campaign was sent to a psychiatric hospital for prisoners Friday amid concern he may try to commit suicide. Colin Dunstan, 43, is facing 28 counts of endangering life through the use of an explosive device. He was arrested at Canberra Hospital a week ago after being admitted with a slashed wrist, climaxing three days of national panic over letter bombs. One letter bomb exploded at the Canberra mail centre Dec. 2, slightly injuring two postal workers. That led to a nationwide alert in which 27 similar devices were discovered. Dunstan appeared in the Canberra Magistrates Court Friday for a decision on where to carry out a mental health assessment of him. Chief Magistrate Ron Cahill transferred Dunstan to Sydney's Long Bay psychiatric hospital and jail, where trained staff would be able to keep him under observation around-the-clock. Cahill said he was concerned about Dunstan's welfare after initial psychiatric assessments found that he was at risk of harming himself. "If we're wrong it could have fatal results," Cahill said. Dunstan, who has made no plea or bail application, was ordered to reappear in Canberra's Magistrates Court on Dec. 23 following psychiatric assessment. Dunstan had been on leave from the Australian Tax Office after having an affair with a female co-worker in 1990 and 1991, according to court documents. He blamed this episode for the breakup of his own marriage. He apparently also blamed the tax office and various human rights and equal opportunity officials for his troubles. Police said all of the 28 letter bombs were all addressed to such authorities.

Anti-drug message on pencil turns pro-drug during sharpening

TICONDEROGA, New York (AP) — A company is trying to erase an embarrassing mistake it made on pencils bearing an anti-drug message. The pencils carry the slogan: "Too Cool To Do Drugs." But a sharp-eyed fourth-grader in northern New York noticed when the pencils are sharpened, the message turns into "Cool to Do Drugs" then simply "Do Drugs." As a result of the discovery by 10-year-old Kodi Mosier of Ticonderoga Elementary School, the company, called The Bureau For At-Risk Youth of Plainville, recalled the pencils. "We're actually a little embarrassed that we didn't notice that sooner," spokeswoman Darlene Clair told Friday's Press-Republican of Plattsburgh. A new batch of pencils will have the message written in the opposite direction, so when they are sharpened, they read "Too Cool To Do" and finally "Too Cool." For pointing out the botched message, Kodi earned his class a letter of apology from the company and a box full of T-shirts. Why does Kodi think the company didn't catch the mistake themselves? "I guess they didn't sharpen their pencils," he said.



Britain's Queen Elizabeth smiles as a little girl gives a model plane to French President Jacques Chirac (right), with French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin (centre) looking on, during ceremonies marking the 80th anniversary of the end of the First World War (Reuters photo)

China warns U.S. over Taiwan, Tibet

BEIJING (AFP) — China issued its strongest warning yet against what it sees as U.S. interference in Taiwan and Tibet Wednesday and urged Washington to correct its "erroneous stance."

"Despite the repeated opposition of China, the U.S. government sent U.S. Energy Secretary Bill Richardson to Taiwan where he even met (President) Lee Tung-Hui," foreign ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao said.

It also "allowed (Tibet's) exiled spiritual leader) the Dalai Lama to visit the United States and even arranged for him to meet with President

Bill Clinton, Vice-President Al Gore and U.S. Secretary for State Madeleine Albright," he said in a statement carried on state television.

China regards Taiwan as a renegade province and does not allow countries with diplomatic ties to Beijing to have any official contacts with the island.

China also sees any discussions on the future of Tibet as an internal matter and accuses the exiled Dalai Lama of using the international community to garner support for an independent Tibet.

Tuesday, Richardson met with Lee in Taiwan, while the

Dalai Lama met Clinton, Gore and Albright in Washington.

"We express our serious concern and strong dissatisfaction," Zhu said, adding that Washington was in violation of undertakings it had given to Beijing on both of the issues.

"We are resolutely opposed to this and will never accept it," he added.

Richardson is the first U.S. cabinet minister to travel to Taiwan since the 1994 visit by then transport secretary Federico Pena.

The United States recognised Taipei until 1979 when it switched official ties to

Beijing and it still maintains a strong economic presence there.

Taiwan split from the mainland when the defeated Nationalist government fled there in 1949.

Tibet was "liberated" by Chinese troops two years later and the Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959 after an abortive uprising.

"The Chinese government calls upon the U.S. government to act in strict accordance with its undertakings... and take measures to correct its erroneous stance," Zhu said.

China denies creeping invasion of Spratlys

MANILA (R) — China Wednesday denied it was engaged in a "creeping invasion" of disputed isles in the South China Sea and said the structures it had built on a reef claimed by Manila were not directed at anyone.

Chinese Ambassador Guan Cheng Ming spoke to reporters after meeting Foreign Secretary Domingo Siazon to finalise details of talks on Nov. 17 between Chinese President Jiang Zemin and Philippine

President Joseph Estrada.

The Jiang-Estrada talks, to be held in Kuala Lumpur on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, will discuss the diplomatic tension between the two countries arising from their conflicting claims over the Spratlys, Siazon said.

"I reiterate the Philippines and China are good neighbours... There is no such creeping incident," Guan said, reacting to charges by Philippine

Defence Secretary Orlando Mercado that China's alleged build-up of facilities on Mischief Reef was a "creeping invasion." Mercado has also accused China of bullying the Philippines.

"There is no such thing (as) one side bullying another side," Guan said.

He said the facilities on the reef were shelters for fishermen and that the Chinese working there were only repairing damage caused by nature.

The Philippines has said the facilities looked like potential piers which could take in big ships and could be used for military purposes.

Mischief Reef is one of a cluster of isles and rocky outcrops in parts of the South China Sea believed to be potentially rich in oil and gas. The area is claimed wholly or in part by China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei.

British Queen takes part in WW I remembrance ceremony

PARIS (AFP) — Britain's Queen Elizabeth took part in a solemn ceremony here Wednesday marking the 80th anniversary of the armistice that ended the Great War in which 8.5 million soldiers were killed across Europe.

Bugles sounded across Paris as the queen and President Jacques Chirac laid wreaths at the tomb of the unknown soldier under the Arc de Triomphe at the beginning of a day of commemorations to remember the dead, a ceremony watched by a crowd of thousands in bright sunshine.

Queen Elizabeth, dressed in a violet, a large poppy pinned on her lapel, laid a wreath of red poppies at the foot of the eternal flame by the tomb while Chirac, a cornflower in his buttonhole, deposited a wreath of the blue flowers.

The bugler was clad in a grey World War I uniform, symbolising the call at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month that sounded the armistice, while six of the 1,200 French survivors of the Great War shook hands with the monarch.

The queen and Chirac later paid homage at the statue of Georges Clemenceau, at the foot of the Champs Elysees. He was the French prime minister who saw the country through to victory in 1918.

As plumed French soldiers on horseback played the Last Post at the foot of Clemenceau's statue, soldiers in period uniform filed down the Champs Elysees avenue on ancient bicycles, in horse-drawn carriages dragging the .75 mm canon that fired six shells a minute, and in early 20th century civilian vehicles and taxis requisitioned to bring troops to the front.

Later Wednesday, the queen was to unveil a statue of British World War II leader Winston Churchill, close to Clemenceau's effigy.

The 3.2-metre bronze statue of Sir Winston depicts the British leader in a characteristically aggressive pose, with a jutting jaw and gritted teeth. It is inspired from his appearance on Nov. 11, 1944, as he strode down the Champs Elysees with Charles de Gaulle, three months after the liberation of Paris.

The work by French sculptor Jean Cardot has been placed on a plinth outside the Petit Palais at the corner of Avenue Winston Churchill and the Cours de la Reine.

While Chirac was then to visit a clearing at Rethondes, north of Compiègne, where generals signed the armistice in a railway carriage. Queen Elizabeth was to travel to Ypres in Belgium, the scene of some of the most ferocious fighting in World War I.

She would lay a wreath at the Menin Gate, a monument that bears the names of the 50,000 men from both northern and southern Ireland who died fighting in the ranks of the British army.

In an initiative designed to strengthen Anglo-Irish reconciliation in the wake of the Northern Ireland peace accord, the tower has been built at Messines Ridge, scene of the only battle where troops from north and south fought alongside each other.

Its inauguration would be the first public event ever undertaken jointly by the British and Irish heads of state.

event involving men who lived through it.

They come against a background of growing calls for a reappraisal of the actions of the hundreds of thousands of soldiers who either fled the trenches in terror or mutilated rather than accept orders to march to certain death.

The British monarch was also to join Irish President Mary McAleese and King Albert II of the Belgians in inaugurating the Irish Peace Tower, a new memorial to the 50,000 men from both northern and southern Ireland who died fighting in the ranks of the British army.

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New vaccine enables monkeys to fight off HIV

SYDNEY (R) — Australian scientists said Wednesday they had created a breakthrough vaccine which enables monkeys to fight off the HIV virus, and plan to start testing it in humans next year.

"It looks good so far. We just hope that it holds up when we get a chance to test it (in humans)," Dr. Alistair Ramsay, an immunologist at Australian National University, told Reuters.

Researchers in Canberra and Melbourne separately administered two vaccines, one to prime the immune system and another to boost it into action, before infecting four monkeys with the HIV virus.

The monkeys were initially infected but produced large numbers of "killer T cells" to clear the virus from their system within weeks. Four unvaccinated monkeys contracted the virus, which causes AIDS in humans but not in monkeys.

The body's T cells are its first line of defence against infection, targeting and destroying foreign invaders.

The researchers described their work in a scientific paper published in the U.S.-based Journal of Virology Wednesday.

The researchers from the ANU, the Australian government's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and Macfarlane Burnett Centre, combined two immunisation methods, neither of which is effective on its own.

First, "DNA immunisation" introduced a modified HIV gene into the monkeys' skin cells and stimulated their immune systems.

Then, a few weeks later, "viral immunisation" introduced the same HIV "gag" gene in a harmless fowl-pox vector vaccine, producing a sharp surge in the number of T cells.

When the macaque monkeys were then infected with HIV the T cells multiplied even further and began to attack cells infected by the virus.

The World Health Organisation says up to 40 mil-

lion people around the world are living with the AIDS virus, with Africa the worst-affected continent but Asia also facing a pandemic.

The disease killed an estimated 2.3 million people last year.

Ramsay said AIDS vaccine teams around the world were focusing on the "CD8 T cells" — but the Australian effort was the first to use the dual vaccine procedure to boost them.

The Australian team plans to use the fowl-pox vaccine in a therapeutic trial on HIV carriers in Sydney and Melbourne next year to see if the vaccine could help ward off AIDS, he said.

Then it hopes to start overseas trials on non-infected humans, probably in Southeast Asia.

The team hopes to win U.S. funding, probably from the U.S.-based International AIDS Initiative, which helps speed the development of candidate vaccines, Ramsay said.

"We would hope to be in clinical trials within two years — and we'd know within three to

five years if it worked," he said.

Another ANU scientist, Professor Ian Ramsay, said current weapons against AIDS — condoms to avoid infection or a cocktail of drugs to fight it — were either too expensive or for various reasons too hard to distribute in the Third World.

"A vaccine is the only answer," Ramsay said. "The advantage of our system is it is very cheap and does not require refrigeration which can be a major difficulty in tropical countries." "The vaccine will cost only a few cents per shot and can be administered without expensive equipment, or training." Another researcher involved in the potential vaccine, CSIRO animal health specialist David Boyle, was more guarded.

"I'm quite cautious about HIV vaccines because there have been a lot of efforts so far and none has been successful," Boyle told Reuters. "Until you test it there's been no proof of the pudding."

Scientists find sex hormones shape the developing and adult brain

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Sex hormones can influence brain development in the young, memory in the old and may explain why young men tend to develop neurological problems like autism and dyslexia while older women suffer from depression and anxiety, scientists say.

"We are recognising with some surprise the extent to which the brain responds" to sex steroids, said Douglas Meinecke of the National Institute of Mental Health in Washington.

"These hormones — testosterone, progesterone and oestrogen — have profound effects on

the brain and the brain is profoundly responsive."

Meinecke discussed the role of sex hormones in development and ageing Monday at the Society for Neuroscience annual meeting.

Researchers hope the hormones can be used to fend off the ravages of ageing and disease.

Already, oestrogen replacement therapy has been observed to protect older women against Alzheimer's disease.

Nancy Forger, a psychologist at the University of Massachusetts, said she's found that sex hormones can prevent

cell death.

Men have more motor neurons in their spinal cords that govern muscles attached to the penis, she found. The neurons are found both in men and women before birth; however, in the absence of male hormones, the neurons degenerate in females.

Forger is trying to learn how male hormones save these cells and understand the role of proteins that regulate growth and survival of neurons.

Margaret McCarthy, a physiologist at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, suggested that early exposure to

male hormones can create permanent brain changes.

Testosterone levels in rats are as high in development as they're going to be in adulthood, she said. Giving a female rat testosterone creates "a male brain never to be switched back."

Similarly, if testosterone-producing organs are removed from the male rat, he ends up with a "female brain," she said.

Only male reproductive organs produce sex hormones during development, she said. Female sex organs, which produce oestrogen, are inactive until later.

"As far as we know, it is also true for humans," McCarthy said.

Asked about male and female brain differences, she noted that boys suffer from more neurological disorders than girls. They're more likely to have schizophrenia, autism and dyslexia, while girls are more likely to suffer neurological illnesses later in life such as major depression, anxiety disorders, panic disorders or eating disorders.

"This hormonal difference early in life may set up a situation that more easily goes awry and explains why boys are more

susceptible at an early age," she said.

John Morrison, a neurobiology professor at Mount Sinai Medical School in New York, said his studies of oestrogen's effects on a brain region called the hippocampus may shed light on ageing.

He has found the number of receptors on hippocampal cells fluctuates, depending on how much oestrogen is present.

"The hippocampus mediates memory and loss of memory is one of the key events to ageing," he said.

'Taliban attacked northern province'

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP) — Afghanistan's northern-based alliance said Wednesday that the Taliban religious army launched a punishing offensive in northern Takhar province.

Fighter jets belonging to the Taliban army pounded opposition positions in two different districts of Takhar province, some 250 kilometres north of the beleaguered Afghan capital, said an opposition spokesman, who identified himself only as Arif.

"The fighter planes of Taliban are bombing our positions and intense fighting is going on at Dashi-Archai and Bangi (districts)," he said.

There was no immediate comment from the Taliban militia. There was no report of casualties or whether any ground was won or lost by either side in Afghanistan's protracted conflict.

Until this week the Taliban and their opposition, led by former military chief Ahmad Shah

Massoud, had been observing a cease fire and were promising to exchange prisoners. It is expected that the prisoner exchange would go ahead.

The ceasefire was brokered by Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Abdullah and apparently acceptable to both sides in the civil war that has ravaged this central Asian state.

The Taliban, or the students of Islam, control 90 per cent of Afghanistan, including Kabul. They follow a harsh version of Islam that bars women from work and education, forces men to wear beards and bans all light entertainment including music.

The Taliban are Sunni Muslims and mostly Pashtuns — the majority ethnic group of Afghanistan. The opposition, which hold only 10 per cent of the country, comprise mostly of religious and ethnic minorities, including Shites, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras.

Russian town faces cold evacuation if fuel supplies fail

MOSCOW (AFP) — The Russian authorities could be forced to evacuate 4,000 people from a town on the northern Chukotka peninsula if fuel supplies fail to arrive before the annual big freeze, an official warned Wednesday.

As Russia braced itself for its coldest winter in 30 years, Pyotr Markov, an official in Anadyr, the northeastern Chukotka region's main town, said the fate of residents in Mys Shmidta depended on the arrival of 8,000 tonnes of diesel fuel.

"If the tanker doesn't arrive in the next eight to 10 days, the situation will be catastrophic and we'll have to evacuate the population by plane," he told AFP by telephone.

"In 10 days' time it won't be possible to break the ice to reach us until next summer," he added.

Fuel shortages are also causing concern on the Kamchatka peninsula, where schools and homes are without heating because the authorities have no cash to pay for fuel supplies.

The looming crisis comes as meteorologists predict Russia will suffer its worst winter in three decades after temperatures plunged to minus 19 Celsius in the Moscow region and minus 42 Celsius in the eastern Siberian town of Udachny.

Such low temperatures in Moscow are rare for mid-November, occurring only once every 20 years or so, meteorologists say.

So far nine people have died from cold this week in Moscow, city medical services said. Each year hundreds of drunks and homeless people perish in the bitter Russian cold.

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Peace requires commitment

THE ENEMIES of peace in the Middle East would obviously stop at nothing to derail the peace accords that were recently reached between Israel and the Palestinians. The shooting at two Israeli soldiers Tuesday following the suicide bombing in Jerusalem a few days earlier and on the eve of the Israeli cabinet's meeting to consider the accord Wednesday shows the tenacity of the anti-peace elements. That is why the champions of peace should not waver in their commitment to advancing the peace process come what may from the anti-peace factions, because the most effective way to frustrate the designs of these groups is to go ahead with the peace process and the implementation of the Wye River memorandum as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, Israel has so far responded to these terrorist attacks each time by postponing the execution of the Wye River accord, raising new issues and calling for additional conditions. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat should, therefore, reach an understanding on this matter and agree between themselves on how to react to terrorist attacks from either side in order to send clear signals to all factions that no matter how much they try to sabotage the painstakingly negotiated agreements, they will not succeed. Israeli Labour Knesset member Yossi Beilin has proposed such an understanding with the aim of frustrating the designs of all those determined to stop the peace process. It would be useful to take up Beilin's initiative as the basis for reaching such an agreement.

The pattern already set by Netanyahu to suspend consideration of the Wye River pact each time a violent act is committed is exactly the wrong message that he should be sending to his people as well as to the Palestinians. Now that the Israeli cabinet has started the process of approving the agreement, we hope that the Israeli prime minister will not put additional obstacles in the way of having it approved by the Knesset as well. Unlike the Israelis, the Palestinians do not opt for freezing the process every time an Israeli terrorist attack is committed against one of their people. Netanyahu needs to manifest high statesmanship by going ahead with the endorsement of the recent peace accord. The adoption of the Wye River pact and its actual implementation would be the clearest sign that Israel is committed to promoting peace in the area.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Fanek charged that there is a very strong relation between privatisation on the one hand, and democracy, personal freedom, and public participation on the other. It is probable that privatisation brings democracy and liberty because it frees people from government control, said Fanek. People may be fed up with government bureaucracy and move towards the privatised sectors involved in production and public service in a bid to upgrade the quality of products and services offered while reducing the costs. Fanek said that Arabs wish to reach a good standard of life and democracy, but both are interconnected, so seeking one is gaining the other. The writer charged that privatisation is the way towards a better life, but it has to be done honestly, in a clear and transparent manner.

Al Dustour's editorial commented on Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh's visit to Saudi Arabia saying that such a visit is very important on all fronts: it will further ties between the two Arab countries, and the two parties will discuss the recent developments in the peace process — after the signing of the Wye River accord between the Palestinians and Israel — as well as the Iraq crisis. Al Dustour said the visit expresses the keenness of both sides to boost bilateral relations, and shows how much both sides feel for each other. Jordanians from all walks of life still remember the message sent by King Fahd to His Majesty King Hussein wishing him a quick recovery, said the paper. It added that all Jordanians are looking forward to bringing relations between the two Arab countries back to normal.

View from Academia

No more heroes, it's time to work together

Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

IN OUR part of the world, some people still believe in what one may best call the power of isolated, or isolationist, individuals. Progress is made and success is achieved, in the opinions of the many who espouse such a philosophy, not through an overall system or strategy in which everybody (at least a majority) takes part, but through the miraculous acts or achievements of specific individuals.

It is like the myth of the mighty soldier. War is won when a totally unknown soldier emerges out of the ranks suddenly, after a dramatic event, to lead the whole army to victory.

I distinctly remember, when I was an undergraduate student, many of my colleagues' disappointment at what the instructor in our military science class was saying. He was arguing that modern warfare is very different from that of, say, medieval times (or romances) when a lot depended on the ability of individual knights or heroes. Technology is important; thorough training for all is vital; overall morale or psychology is crucial. Wars

are won on the basis of the preparedness and qualifications of the army at large. Many of my colleagues did not like this at all. "What about individual heroes?" they kept interrupting.

Full of the adventures of Beowulf and Rambo (even before the birth of Rambo) and of the political slogans of the time, they kept insisting on the power of gifted soldiers and commanders.

When we talk about change in the world of education today, we keep hearing the same argument, as that of my romantic colleagues. You cannot impose a system on everyone, the argument goes. The matter has to be left to individual teachers. It all depends on how good your teachers are.

To some extent, there is truth in the argument. However, we cannot rely just on the ability of teachers, only a small number of whom are gifted.

Undeniably, a gifted teacher is an asset, but how many gifted teachers are there? More importantly, how much overall impact can gifted teachers (who are found in iso-

lated pockets here and there) make? Change is overall; progress is overall. Elitism is a problem. Quantity is important. Quality in education is much like quality in crops. You, as a farmer, cannot be content with one tenth, eighth, or sixth of your tomatoes being good or excellent. You lose a lot if only half of your yield is sellable.

The same thing applies to education. The market demands quality students in large numbers. I, therefore, cannot rely on isolated teachers here and there to graduate small numbers of good or excellent students in pockets scattered here and there in my society or institution.

We have to pay more attention to the overall system, the overall strategies, the overall needs, and the overall preparedness of our teachers and institutions, and not those of individual teachers or sections alone.

Education (pardon the metaphor) is like modern warfare: you cannot rely on defunct individual knights, horsemen, and warriors to win the day for you. Everyone should chip in.

LETTERS

Best wishes

To the editor:

WE WOULD like to congratulate His Majesty King Hussein on his birthday, and wish him a long and successful reign. We all pray and hope for His Majesty's speedy recovery. May God return him back to us soon.

Ala'a Nagawa
Amman
nagawa@jonet.com

To the editor:

I WOULD just like to wish His Majesty King Hussein a Happy Birthday and a complete and healthy recovery. From all of us in New York and in Maryland, I hope you will accept our sincere gratitude and best wishes.

Anas Nasra and Family
New York
US

Can someone explain?

To the editor:

I AM a 15-year-old Jordanian-American girl living in Amman, raised in Chicago. I know a lot about Jordanian culture, heritage, and customs. For my age, I know more than I actually should. But there are a couple of things I cannot seem to understand, and I doubt I'm the only one.

I read the story about the 2-year-old girl who had her throat slashed by her father. It said that the father did this to get revenge on his THIRD wife. How can you get revenge on somebody by injuring someone else, who has nothing to do with it? This boy was in critical condition for quite a long time.

Another is about the 12-year-old girl who was found guilty of manslaughter! She was raped and abused, both physically and mentally, by her uncle. Someone you are supposedly meant to trust. When she finally became pregnant

after two months of abuse, nobody noticed. Okay, maybe some people don't show, but she was only 12! This was only half of the revolting truth. I was already horrified when I read this much. When she went into labour, not knowing what to do of course, she went to the roof of her house and had the infant. Not knowing what to do, again, she threw the baby girl into the bushes. That's not the disgusting part. The worst part is that she was found guilty of manslaughter. Manslaughter. Why isn't abortion considered manslaughter too? 12-year-olds should not even be eligible to receive such a conviction. Maybe she needed to go to the juvenile center for counselling. Believe me, she needs it. Especially after such a gruesome ordeal.

I love Jordan as much as a pure Jordanian, but these are very confusing matters. My letter probably won't change anything, but I need other people to know that even the younger generation have a point of view.

Leila Haddadin
Amman

Water woes

To the editor:

WE LIVE just next to the Water Authority. This does not mean that we are blessed and partake in the luxury of having all the vital liquid we want. Actually, after all the hue and cry that accompanied the water "crisis" in the summer, we are back to square one. That is, if water became potable again, it did not become plentiful as well.

One can easily understand that reasons are aplenty, but do the people responsible for distributing water equally understand that living from one week to another on two cubic metres of water is an act of fine balancing even for a small household?

I believe it only takes a bit of juggling with schedules (and, of course brains) to satisfy next to everybody, but apparently somebody is not willing to undertake the exercise.

V. Wabbeh
Amman

Development

Unholy problems for Holy Land tourism

BYBLOS — Although my visit last week to this historic Lebanese town was not for tourism, in a place like Byblos the subject can't be far from one's mind. The lovely coast, pleasant hilly hinterland, and Gemutlich port and old section of Byblos are a tourist's delight: clean with a good infrastructure, and full of helpful local people.

Unfortunately, this is more than can be said for some other parts of both Lebanon and for various tourist attractions in much of the rest of the region, a topic increasingly on the minds of many as the year 2000 approaches. This is because, for the regional tourism sector, the "Year 2000 Question," — with all due respect to my fellow Jordan Times columnist Jean-Claude Elias — has more to do with the preparations for the celebration of the second millennium of the birth of Christ than with computers.

The Levant area as a whole, including Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine, has unique tourism possibilities, and these will be highlighted by the Year 2000 celebrations. With visitors descending on the street in Damascus where Saul became St. Paul to parts of southern Lebanon where Christ walked and the site on the east bank of the Jordan where he was baptised among myriad attractions, including of course Bethlehem, the region should be in for a bonanza. Hopefully using these celebrations as a platform for future growth, international tourists, including hundreds of millions of affluent Europeans near by, will eventually help us turn this potential into some serious money.

However, despite an exceptional variety and quality of natural, historical and cultural attractions, Lebanon, Jordan and their neighbours have failed in recent decades to benefit meaningfully from growth in tourism. Behind this problem has been an important political element, which has extinguished most international travel during times of war or crippled tourism due to tension. Particularly since mid-1996, the election of a hard-line Israeli government has clouded the tourism horizon. So until a true breakthrough occurs in the peace process, the political situation will continue to have a negative effect on the tourism industry.

Given a modicum of stability, however, Jordan and Palestine especially are both looking to strong growth of tourism starting in the year 2000. This makes the need greater in both Jordan and Palestine's tourism for better planning and sound infrastructure development.

Although Jordan and Palestine feature enough attractions to support a self-contained tourism industry, they have not yet become established as autonomous destinations. Jordan and Palestine separately or together appear to be "transit" areas, where an international tourist spends a few hours or at most a couple of days. This is largely due to the lack of adequate tourist infrastructure, innovative project concepts, and marketing, and to the prevailing political situation.

The Year 2000 will offer a chance to develop and market Jordan and Palestine on their own merits. Until then, the average length of stay in Jordan will remain low in comparison to a nearby destination such as Egypt.

In other words, after the Year 2000 tourism growth in the region could bring tremendous benefits; but it could also pose considerable threats to the environment. Forcing local people to give up part of their own identity and adopt uniform rules of behaviour around tourists may destroy culture. Overdevelopment, and subsequent overuse of tourism resources, can help to destroy the environment. Many shortcomings in our tourism such as lack of market research and planning, adequate policies and legislation, information on tourism's possible implications and cooperation between key local stakeholders could then be aggravated by growth.

International experience also shows that growth may put severe strains on the local capacity of specific geographical areas. A tourist boom can also have a significant impact on local inhabitants. While they often want the benefits of tourism, these people can lack a realistic understanding of what is involved in achieving this development and of its impact. During peak seasons, visitors often outnumber the native population, which puts undoubted pressures on the local culture and resources.

To be sustainable, development needs to preserve the environment on which it depends. Having a beautiful country like Lebanon, Syria, Jordan or Palestine is a good start for a tourism sector, but not a sufficient condition for its sustainability. In other words, stunning landscapes and fabulous historical sites have to be protected while being developed. In this process, beside the economic opportunities to be gained with

tourism development, there will be a significant increase in the threat arising from its growth. Tourism is not necessarily a clean, non-resource-consuming economic activity, free of the environmental impact attributed to some manufacturing, mining and agriculture. For tourism to flourish, the resources which it uses intensively must continue to be available (i.e. pristine landscapes and coasts, unpolluted sites, and so on). The negative consequences of high-volume tourism involve massive use of resources as well as huge emissions of waste, wastewater, noise, etc. By exceeding carrying capacities on the physical, social and ecological levels, tourism could be destroying its own basis and endangering its own long-term future.

Much damage to the environment as a result of tourism is caused by the pressure of the volume of visitors arriving at destinations which are not used to supporting people in such great numbers, but today environmental factors are moving higher on list of essentials for holiday destinations. Tour operators are asked to offer unspoiled landscape and nature, and ecotourism is developing fast in parts of the region, including Lebanon, where at least three companies are already developing the market. This is a case, also found elsewhere in the world, where international tourists can actually help in preserving the local environment. Let's hope that the Year 2000 will see an onslaught of visitors of various colours to the Holy Land, and that they will include many shades of Green.

Hesitation and peace don't mix

A DANGEROUS trend keeps reoccurring in the pursuit of Middle East peace. Militant opponents seem to use the utmost violence in the period between the beginnings of the making of genuine peace and its implementation.

For over a year during the Netanyahu administration's effective freeze in the peace process, the Islamic militants were quiet. But as soon as the Wye River Plantation Memorandum was signed, radical Islamic Palestinians went into high gear carrying out two major suicide attacks in a space of ten days.

This trend is not new. In the 1970s radical Palestinian groups assassinated senior PLO officials in Europe who were beginning to strike up a peace dialogue with left wing Israelis.

In the 80s Anwar Sadat was killed before the implementation of the Camp David Accords had been completed. And in the 90s Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish fanatic before seeing the Oslo Accords carried out. To a certain degree radicals have succeeded in slowing down or cooling down the moves to lasting peace in the region.

A key to the success of any peace process is the absolute commitment of its parties to move ahead no matter what. The moment that fanatics see one slight twitch of hesitation by either party they exploit that to the end. When a suicide bombing took place during the Rabin administration his response was very clear. "We will mourn the dead for one week and then on day eight we will be back at the negotiating table," he told his own public.

The recent decision by Benjamin Netanyahu to become a partner to Yasser Arafat in the peace process was an important milestone. But this decision will be worthless if both Islamic and Jewish radicals can sense the slightest potential for a retraction or a slow down. Israelis and Palestinian leaders must recognise the simple reality that they are in this peace boat together. It will either sink with both of them or both will reach the shores of peace and freedom together.

Such an understanding will require a different approach to issues of security. Netanyahu and his aides can't continue to publicly chastise the Palestinian National Authority every time a bomb blows up. In the latest incident, for example,

Israeli officials had publicly praised the Palestinian Authority for its crackdown on the militants one day before the suicide attack. The following day they publicly attacked the Palestinians blaming them for not doing enough.

There is no doubt that these indiscriminate attacks against civilians make the job of a leader like Netanyahu difficult. The same happens to Arafat when fanatic Jewish settlers kill Palestinians or rampage through the Hebron market. It is hard to defend a peace process when your people are being blown up.

The Palestinian public has not seen any reason to identify with the Israeli government's quest for peace requires the same courage and decisiveness as that of war. But whereas war pits people and their leadership against each other, the quest for peace requires a different set of partners. The majority of both the peoples to any peace deal and their leaders must be united against the extremists and radical elements who are opposed to peace. When a suicide bombing took place in the early days of the Oslo Accords, Palestinians demonstrated for the first time against fellow Palestinians. Thousands of Palestinians in Nabulus and Gaza marched under the banner "Yes to Peace, No to Violence." Such outward Palestinian acts have long since disappeared as the Palestinian public has not seen any reason to identify with the present Israeli government.

The commitments made at Wye were important, but they must be reflected in a radically new approach. From the moment that both leaders made peace between themselves, they should have made it clear to all that they are not turning back. New peace thinking requires that when indiscriminate acts of violence take place against Palestinians or Israelis the response must be unified, balanced and proportionate.

Both Arafat and Netanyahu need to stand side by side after any anti-peace incident and repeat to the public their unified commitment to peace and security for both people. Such an act will not necessarily mean an immediate end to violence. But if Israeli and Palestinian leaders can withstand short-term public criticism and stay on course, while working genuinely for peace, there is no doubt that in the medium and long range peace can in fact be at hand.

Society on the move

Benefits with aroma and a special birthday greeting



Femme Fatales: (from left to right) Rania Salti, Yola Jahshan, Tala Nuqul, Mira Qwelder, and Rula Dallal at the Christian Dior organised benefit for the Promise Welfare Society

AS THE holiday season approaches benefit events have started dotting the calendar. Last week two such events brought women together to support the efforts of the Young Women's Muslim Association and the Promise Welfare Society.

FROM THE KITCHEN TO THE CATWALK: On Sunday, under the patronage of HRH Princess Sarvath El Hassan, the Pakistan Women's Association launched a cookbook — *Pakistani Cooking Made Easy*. The combined efforts of many of the women from Jordan's Pakistani community, the hardcover book also contains covered recipes from Princess Sarvath's own culinary repertoire. At

the mid-day tea hosted by the association at the Marriott Hotel, PWA President Maria Khon presented the Princess with 300 copies of the cookbook as a donation to the Young Women's Muslim Association, of which Princess Sarvath has been the patron since 1972. The book proved a "best seller" as women lined up to purchase one or more copies during Sunday's function, attended also by Ruwaida Tarawneh, wife of Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh, Iman Khattib, wife of Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khattib, Nahla Qadi, wife of Interior Minister Nayef Qadi, and Hind Nasser. Copies of *Pakistani Cooking Made Easy* are on sale at the Marriott Hotel Gift Shop.

300 predominantly fashion conscious but conservative women of Amman on a ride on his cleverly called *Diorient Express* from the land of Pochantas to Medici palaces. The video was followed by a short, live fashion show of four Dior fashions from the collection modelled by Rimal Models Inc. Completing the Dior experience was the launch of "Hypnotic Poison" — the fashion house's latest perfume "fatale" for a "diabolique woman." All proceeds from the sale of tickets to the event went to benefit the work of the Promise Welfare Society.

EARLIER, on Saturday evening, the House of Dior organised a benefit event for the Promise Welfare Society, chaired by HRH Princess Alia Faisal. The function, presented by Christian Dior representative for the Middle East Brigitte Lefebvre (who delighted the audience with her Arabic) and assisted by Philippe Rayau, Dior Perfumes Area Manager, and Abeer Abdel Rahim, Dior agent in Amman, included a video of haute couture designer John Galiano's fall-winter collection. Deriving his phantasmal inspiration from bygone eras, Galiano took



Mon Dieu, c'est fantastique... diabolique... hypnotique: Yola Jahshan presenting Dior's newest fragrance "Hypnotic Poison"

Corps to present a joint concert at the Palace of Culture at 8:00 p.m. The concert will feature well known German military marches, Jordanian tunes and other famous pieces. For information, contact the German embassy at 593-0351. Also, today the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology in Amman and the Conservation and Restoration Centre in Petra open their "Crossroads of Civilisations" exhibition of German archaeological endeavours beginning as far back as the 1306 identification of Umm Qais with ancient Gadara by Ulrich Jasper Seetzen. The field studies and archaeological activities span from the early Neolithic period (8th millennium B.C.) via the Bronze and Iron Ages to the Roman and Byzantine periods and further to the Ottoman time.

TIME FLIES: Celebrating an anniversary — the 4th — is the staff of the Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery. Centre Director Dr. Daoud Hanania will host a late evening reception on Tuesday to mark the occasion. The medical care facility, once the largest building in the Fifth Circle, now almost dwarfed by the towering construction of the Sheraton Hotel, was officially opened by Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor four years ago. Hanania, who is a former director of the Royal Medical Services, is a current member of the Upper House of Parliament.

INTERLINING: Congratulations are in order again for



Ramzi Shuwayhat

Royal Jordanian Director of Cargo Sales Ramzi Shuwayhat. At the recent 31st Annual General Assembly of the World Airlines Club Association, Shuwayhat, who is president of the Jordan Interline Club, was re-elected president of the WACA Executive Committee until the year 2000. As the incumbent president, Shuwayhat presided over the annual meeting of the association's 76 representative airline clubs, this year hosted in Lisbon. The Jordanian delegation to the meeting comprised 28 participants and observers. Also at the event, the Jordan Interline Club was awarded a certificate as Best Interline Club of the Near East and Africa Region for its effective role in the world interline family as well as for promoting Jordan and tourism to the Kingdom through the airlines, especially those operating to Jordan and in cooperation with Royal Jordanian.

A special Happy Birthday to Sayidna... We're lighting candles for you!!!!

— Jennifer Hamurneh

Science and Technology

How to find the ideal mate — with a ruler

By Malcolm W. Browne

GOOD NEWS from England: Statistical criteria may make it easier for a man with stunted perceptual ability to decide whether a woman is sexually attractive, unattractive or just so-so.

This breakthrough in sexiness assessment was reported in The Lancet, the renowned British journal, in two papers by Martin Tovee, a psychologist, and his colleagues at Newcastle University. The gist of the two reports, one published in November and the other in August, was that sexual attractiveness in women was a function of body weight compared with height.

Naturally, working this out requires some arithmetic. The sexiness quotient proposed by the Newcastle group, called the body-mass index, is calculated by measuring a woman's weight in kilograms and dividing it by the square of her height in metres. Got that?

This means one divides a woman's weight in pounds by 2.205 to get the kilograms and multiplies her height in inches times 0.0254 to get the metres. Then one multiplies that number times itself and divides the result into the weight. Simplicity itself.

After culling various journals (including Playboy magazine, which the authors cited as "a source which has been used by previous researchers and which is judged reliable"), they compiled a table of average body-mass indices as follows: Fashion models, 17.57; other models (including centre-folds), 18.09; anorexic women, 14.72; bulimic women, 23.66; "normal" women, 21.86.

Investigators in the past had theorised that feminine attractiveness was best gauged by a woman's hip-to-waist ratio, on the grounds that a big ratio supposedly signalled fecundity, a quality these scientists equated with sexual attraction. But the Newcastle team tested this hypothesis and found it wanting.

Forty male undergraduates at the university served as a

panel rating the sexiness of full frontal colour pictures of 50 naked women of assorted shapes and sizes, depicted without faces. A graph representing the students' rankings was compared with graphs of the women's body-mass indices and with their waist-hip ratios and it was found that the students' perceptions matched the body-mass ratios much more closely than the waist-hip ratios.

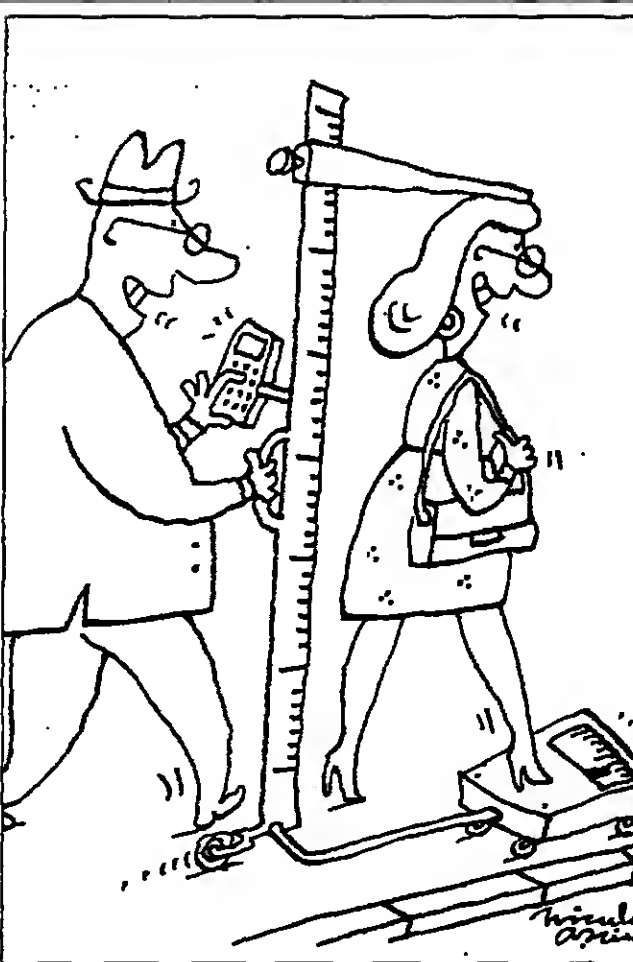
Not to be outdone, the University of Liverpool reported that women who need anthropometric help in picking sexy mates should look above the belt, at their prospects' hands. This conclusion, reported by the magazine New Scientist, came from a study by John Manning and his associates, who focused on male patients in a fertility clinic.

It turned out, he reported, that the men with the lowest sperm counts and poorest sperm motility also had the least symmetrical hands. Manning's group also discovered that men whose ring fingers were longer than their index fingers often had elevated levels of testosterone, and we all know what that means.

Despite the scorn that has been heaped on "anthropometrics" by Stephen Jay Gould (author of "The Mismeasure of Man") and scores of other leading scientists, the urge to learn about people by measuring them seems to be a deep-seated human impulse. From the phrenologists of the 19th century to the heat-sensitive "mood rings" of the 1960s, measurement systems fascinate and entertain even sceptics.

Despite the bad name anthropometric systems have in some circles, they are sometimes useful to forensic scientists.

Among the body parts found in the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing was a leg whose owner could not be identified. Forensic anthropologists measured and studied the leg and finally concluded that it was probably the leg of a white man. But another and more reliable method was available: DNA analysis. To the embarrass-



ment of the anthropometrists, DNA showed that the leg probably came from a black woman.

So, if your body-mass index or finger-length ratio is less than ideal, do not despair. Anthropometrists have been known to err.

— International Herald Tribune

What's in a show

chip talk

By Jean-Claude Elias

METS, the Middle East Technology Show, Jordan's very own computer exhibition started last Monday and welcomes visitors till tomorrow Friday included, at Marj Al Hamam, on Naour Road, 10 miles south of Amman. The show is professionally organised and has attracted a large number of participants this year, more than any other year. Exhibitors have occupied virtually all available booths.

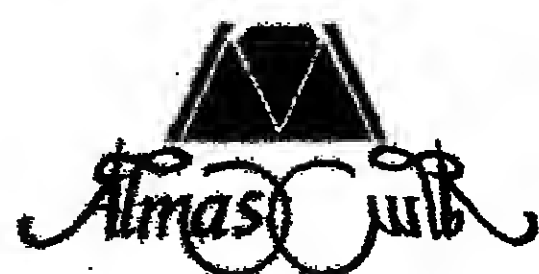
All things being relative, METS, an event organised by the Jordan Computer Society, has grown through the years to respectable proportions. It is a good reflection of the local market. Most companies that have a significant presence on the Jordanian computer scene are present at the show. The participation of Internet service providers (NETS, Global One...) and more particularly of the Jordan Telecommunications Company is a clear indication of the growing interaction between computers and telecommunications. An important number of PCs are being purchased mainly for Internet and e-mail usage.

Apart from the telecommunications aspect, the display of DVD drives — the new Digital Versatile Disc — expected to replace CDs, cassettes and video formats, one couldn't notice any novelty. The recently announced spectacular notebooks by IBM and Siemens, for example, were not available at METS. Nor was the new 4GB removable hard disk drive by Iomega. Exhibitors explained that the

demand for such sophisticated products in the country does not justify importing even a limited number of demo units.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the event, a very pleasant one besides, is the abundance of accessories. From a huge variety of storage towers for CD-Rom discs to trendy headphones-plus-microphone headsets for Internet telephony, one can find a wide, attractive array of useful and not-so-useful gadgets. Also speakers for PCs have graduated from ridiculous tin cans to true high fidelity, powerful stereo systems. An impressive set consisting of a sub-woofer and four mid-range and tweeter satellites was demonstrated. Particularly suitable for the three-dimensional requirements of new games, the set sounds better than most home stereo systems, even when fed with Frederic Chopin waltzes on piano.

Color ink-jet printers producing photo quality output and stunning graphics at prices under JD400 are presented and are selling like hot cakes. Entry level page scanners giving reasonable quality scans are proposed at an incredibly low JD100 or even less. The rush on accessories and inexpensive peripherals confirms the trend that has marked the whole PC industry since the beginning of this year: the definite entry of a personal computers in the consumer domain. Beside the technological and informative aspect, visiting METS is an enjoyable, most pleasant experience.



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— The Guardian

The Darwin awards on the Internet: Dead stupid

By Jim White

IN MARCH 1997, near Krakow in Poland, a 30-year-old farmer named Krystof Azninski was drinking with friends when it was suggested they all strip naked and play some "men's games." This being Poland, the masculine activity they had in mind consisted of hitting each other over the head with frozen turnips. However, one man upped the ante by grabbing a chainsaw and cutting off the end of his foot. Not to be outdone, Azninski grabbed the saw and shouted "watch this, then." He swung the saw at his own head, cutting it off. Later, by way of an epitaph, one of his drinking chums commented: "It's funny, because when he was young he put on his sister's underwear. But he died like a man." In earlier, simpler times, Azninski's death might have remained a matter of village gossip. But in the era of the Internet, news of the manner of his passing spun round the globe faster than something from the office of Kenneth Starr.

It soon came to the attention of a group of comedians who trawl the news wires in search of ridiculous deaths to consider for the annual Darwin Award, so named after

Charles of that ilk to reflect the fact that no matter how refined evolution becomes, the innate stupidity of the human being remains unsurpassed. Azninski stormed the 1997 Darwins, though sadly was unable to be there to receive the award in person. Last week, the 1998 gongs were announced with some flourish over the Internet, the organisers keen to point out that standards remain as high as ever. As well as prizes for actually dying, awards are made for close calls. Two contenders received an honourable mention with the hope of better luck next time: Paul Siller, from New Jersey who, in September, was injured by a quarter-stick of dynamite that blew up in his car.

He and his wife Bonnie were driving around at 2 a.m., bored. So the couple lit the dynamite and lobbed it out of the car window to see what would happen, but apparently failed to notice that the window was closed at the time.

Meanwhile, one night in August Kerry Bingham, from Tacoma, had been drinking with several friends when one of them said they knew a person who had bungee-jumped from the Tacoma Narrows Bridge in the middle of traffic. The conversation

grew more heated and at least 10 men trooped along the walkway of the bridge at 4:30 a.m. Upon arrival at the midpoint they discovered that no one had brought a bungee rope. Bingham, though, pointed out a coil of cable lying nearby. One end of the cable was secured around Bingham's leg and the other end was tied to the bridge. His fall lasted 40 feet before the cable tightened and tore his foot off at the ankle. He miraculously survived and was rescued by two passing fishermen. His foot was never located.

Three contenders, however, managed to fulfil the major requisite of the prize, and their deaths were duly acknowledged for their spectacular pointlessness.

There was the 41-year-old Detroit man who in September got stuck and drowned in two-feet of water after squeezing head-first through an 18-inch-wide sewer grate to retrieve his car keys. In October, a 49-year-old San Francisco stockbroker, who was, according to his wife, "totally zoned when he ran," accidentally jogged off a 200-foot-high cliff on his daily run.

Let the judges be accused of pro-American bias, however, this year's Darwin Award again went to a European: German

zookeeper Friedrich Riesfeldt of Paderborn. Riesfeldt, alarmed by a lengthy bout of constipation suffered by Stefan, an elephant in his charge, fed the animal 22 doses of animal laxative and more than a bushel of berries, figs and prunes.

This was not enough, however, to cause any movement and Friedrich, 46, decided to give the plugged-up pachyderm an olive-oil enema. This did the trick, though rather quicker than the keeper had imagined. Stefan let fly, with the keeper in the line of fire: Riesfeldt was suffocated under more than 200 pounds of discharge.

"The sheer force of the elephant's unexpected defecation knocked Mr Riesfeldt to the ground, where he struck his head on a rock and lay unconscious as the elephant continued to evacuate his bowels on top of him," said Paderborn police detective Erik Dern. "With no one there to help him, he lay under all that dung for at least an hour before a watchman came along, and during that time he suffocated." The Darwin Award organisers have said they have no plans to invite Stefan to America to receive his owner's trophy.

World Bank study decries slump in foreign aid

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The World Bank Tuesday decried a steady decline in foreign aid to poor countries, now down to its lowest point in more than 50 years, and said even a modest increase in assistance could lift 25 million people out of poverty.

A bank report, *Assessing Aid*, found that while more and more developing countries were now pursuing sound economic policies, they were getting markedly less help from rich nations. "It is ironic and tragic that the volume of aid is declining just as the environment

for effective aid is improving," said David Dollar, a World Bank economist and lead author of the study.

The study stressed that financial assistance should be earmarked for poor countries that are nonetheless soundly managed, of which the bank says there are now 32.

If aid flows to well-run economies were increased by \$10 billion a year, an extra 25 million people could escape poverty. By contrast, the same increase allocated across the board would lift only seven million people out of poverty,

according to the bank.

While nearly two billion people live in poverty in countries where more foreign aid could improve living standards, overall assistance has plunged to a paltry 0.22 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of major donor countries.

Financial aid from rich to poor nations is now a third lower than it was in 1990.

Among the least generous, according to the bank study, is the United States, where aid was a mere 0.08 per cent of gross national product (GNP) in 1997.

It said Sweden and other

Nordic countries have traditionally given nearly one per cent of GNP, while among large countries only France commits more 0.45 per cent to foreign aid.

World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz attributed the slump in aid to expanding budget shortfalls in certain donor nations.

"In a period of growing budget deficits it's easier to cut out money for other people than it is within one's own country," he said here. "I hope that now that the United States has a \$70 billion surplus... that that trend can be turned

around."

Stiglitz also cited a lack of awareness on the part of the U.S. public about the effectiveness of aid as well as a popular misconception — as documented in a poll several years ago — that the United States already lavishly dispenses assistance to poor nations. The bank report said donors have tended to direct their aid to countries that get low marks for macroeconomic and social policies, financial structures, legal systems, protection of property rights, absence of corruption and social safety nets.

It attributed such a tendency to hope on the part of donors that aid will induce policy reform.

"Unfortunately, money has proved quite ineffective in generating reform," the bank found, citing Zambia, where foreign aid rose steadily in 1990s as the country's economic management deteriorated.

"For every Zambia, however, there is a Ghana," according to the study. "Ghana received little aid when it had bad policies but has received strong donor support since it reformed."

The report also highlighted the experience of Vietnam, which made use of foreign aid in the form of policy advice rather than money.

Working without World Bank or International Monetary Fund assistance, Vietnam in the late 1980s first sought to open its economy to trade and private enterprise.

By 1992 the country had achieved economic stability and financial inflows began.

"This sequence — ideas first, money when the country is ready to use it well — proved very effective," according to the bank, which found that Vietnam

starting in 1986, saw robust growth and a reduction in poverty.

In another conclusion, the report said there was little evidence that a weak institutional environment can be overcome by targeting aid to specific sectors.

It found that a dollar of foreign aid directed to rural development, for example, boosts domestic spending on such development by just 11 cents.

This is because authorities simply use the money they would have committed to the sector for other priorities.

Cash-starved Iran asks West for \$3b loan

TEHRAN (R) — The Iranian government, beset by doggedly low oil prices and mounting debt, is negotiating with creditors in Japan, Germany and Italy for \$3 billion in bridge loans to stave off a default on debt payments.

"They need to get that \$3 billion as soon as possible," said an analyst close to the debt talks. "If these three countries cannot help them, then they may have to declare bankruptcy."

Economists, businessmen and diplomats say the crunch is now so acute that the government is virtually out of cash, forcing delays in payment to key Western creditors.

One Asian oil trader, in Tehran for an international energy conference, was more blunt: "Right now, Iran has no money."

As a result, several high-profile investments, including a \$1.2 billion credit underwritten by the Italian government and announced in July, are on hold and may be cancelled outright, the diplomats and business-

men say.

To weather the storm, they say, Iran is in talks with creditors from the three countries, among its top trade partners, to secure \$1 billion each in fresh financing. This is in addition to some \$1.5 billion already put up by France.

The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) declined comment on the debt talks, although senior government officials have said repeatedly they were able to meet existing international commitments.

The Majlis, or parliament, last month passed an emergency rescue package, including forward sales of future oil deliveries. Analysts say the measures are too little, too late.

"There is not enough to cover strategic imports and to pay the debts," said one foreign analyst.

The spectre of one of the world's leading oil exporters teetering on the brink reflects a series of inter-related problems. Chief among these are:

* Persistently low prices for crude oil, which pro-

vides Iran with about 80 per cent of its hard currency revenues.

* An imposing, but temporary, mountain of debt, largely left over from a major rescheduling in 1992-1993.

* The failure to tackle the economy's structural problems, including its overreliance on oil revenue.

Oil prices are running around \$11 per barrel, far below the price of \$16 first predicted in the budget for the year ending March 20, 1999.

Iran later lowered the budgeted oil price to \$12 a barrel. Revenues from oil exports for the six months from March fell to \$5 billion, off 39 per cent year on year.

At the same time, the bill for the 1993 restructuring is coming due, augmented by other short-term obligations.

Estimates from one foreign embassy, based in part on official figures, show total revenues for the six months ending Sept. 22 at \$6 billion.

Costs were put at \$9.5

billion for the same period — \$4.4 billion to cover the 1993 rescheduling, \$2.5 billion in short-term debt and letters of credit, and \$2.6 billion on government expenditures, forcing Iran to dip into its reserves.

A similar pattern can be expected for the second half of the current Iranian year, the embassy analysis showed.

Some relief may be in sight — if Iran can navigate the next 12-18 months.

The latest CBI figures peg outstanding foreign debt for this year at \$5.57 billion, dropping to \$3.7 billion next year.

Western projections show just \$864 million in debt for the year after that.

But analysts say prospects for the current round of talks are uncertain, with Japan, Italy and Germany each facing its own set of obstacles to any deal.

In Japan, for example, Iran's creditors are looking to the government for guidance before extending new credits, to be backed by

future oil sales. Pressure from close ally the United States not to aid Iran has dampened any Japanese enthusiasm.

Some of the German debt is owed to a range of medium-sized firms, complicating any such talks by the sheer number of players, while businessmen say Italy's earlier ardour for Iranian deals, on full display this summer, has cooled.

All this, says economist Fariborz Raisdana, begs the question of how Iran fell into this trap in the first place.

"The economy is in crisis, reflecting frozen policies and overreliance on oil. This leaves Iran vulnerable at all times," said Raisdana.

The economy must be overhauled and the power of the traditional merchant elite broken before Iran can safely avoid future oil and debt shocks, he said.

"Perhaps this (debt) problem will provide the shock needed to move ahead," he concluded.

Syria invites Chinese investment

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria called Tuesday for China, which has been the target of much international investment, to take a stake in projects here and also to increase bilateral trade.

Syrian Economy Minister Mohammad Ibrahim urged 30 Chinese businessmen at a meeting here with Syrian business executives "to invest in Syria and cooperate with their Syrian counterparts."

He said in the meeting's opening speech that "Syrian laws encourage investment in the fields of agriculture, industry, road and sea transportation and tourism."

"Syria wants to expand trade with friendly countries because balanced trade strengthens national production and increases investment," he added.

Damascus Chamber of Industry official Hassan Nouri told the businessmen that "Syrian industry could benefit from Chinese technology and experts."

Xu Fu Xing, a Chinese Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation Ministry official leading his country's delegation, said that bilateral trade came to \$154 million in 1997.

Chinese high-tech exports to Syria accounted for \$268 million in 1996 and 1997, he said,

adding that Syria has become "one of China's biggest trading partners in western Asia."

Chinese Ambassador Wu Min said the level of economic ties with Syria "is reaching that of the privileged political relations" between the two countries.

The Chinese business leaders, at the meeting represent 30 major companies in the oil, chemical, electrical, communications, construction, iron and environmental sectors.

They arrived in Syria Monday for a week-long visit to promote Chinese exports and cooperation with Syria, the Chinese embassy said.

Number of investment funds in Bahrain rises

MANAMA (R) — Bahrain has approved 45 new investment funds in 1998, raising the number of funds operating from the island to 406, a Bahrain Monetary Agency (BMA) official has said.

The Central Bank's Executive Director of Banking Control, Khalid Abdullah Atiq, told Bahrain's newspaper Akhbar Al Khaleef that 45 funds had been given licences in the first nine months of 1998.

"The BMA was planning

to bring Bahrain's banking system more in line with the latest international money market trends," Atiq said.

"BMA officials have also stepped up inspection visits to banks to check their internal working systems," he added.

Bahrain — with around 45 offshore banking units, 40 representative offices, 32 investment banks and 19 commercial banks — is the Gulf's main financial hub.

Exchange Rates Wednesday, 11-11-98 ACCESS 444888											
CURRENCY	JORDAN	SAUDI	IRAQI	BAHRAIN	OMAN	QATAR	YEMEN	LIBYAN	EGYPT	SYRIAN	LEBANON
JORDAN DHR	1.0000	0.1887	0.1927	1.8779	1.8300	0.1944	2.3364	2.3378	0.7090		
SAUDI RYAL	5.2964	1.0000	1.0213	9.9489	9.7436	1.0301	12.3783	12.3875	3.7513		
IRAQI DINAR	5.1901	0.9782	1.0000	9.7427	9.5408	1.0087	12.1216	12.1286	3.6770		
BAHRAIN DHR	0.5325	0.0500	0.1026	1.0000	0.9793	0.1035	1.2442	1.2450	0.3770		
OMAN RYAL	0.5438	0.1026	0.1048	1.0212	1.0000	0.1057	1.2705	1.2713	0.3860		
QATAR RYAL	5.1435	0.9708	0.9914	9.8589	9.4587	1.0000	12.0173	12.0252	3.6416		
YEMEN RYAL	0.4280	0.0809	0.0825	0.8038	0.7871	0.0832	1.0000	1.0007	0.3020		
EGYPT POUND	0.4277	0.0807	0.0824	0.8032	0.7866	0.0832	0.9893	1.0000	0.3020		
LIBYAN DHR	21.4831	4.2848	4.1408	40.3427	39.5065	4.1787	50.1831	50.2282	15.2100		
SYRIAN LIRA	1.4124	0.2668	0.2722	2.8524	2.9774	0.2748	3.3000	3.3022	1.0000		
LEBANON LIRA	0.8524	0.1609	0.1643	1.6008	1.5674	0.1657	1.9914	1.9927	0.6000		
GERMAN MARK	2.3757	0.4484	0.4572	4.4813	4.3688	0.4819	5.9206	5.9243	1.8300		
SWITZERLAND FRA	1.9569	0.3893	0.3779	3.6749	3.5987	0.3805	4.5722	4.5752	1.3850		
FRANCE FRANC	7.9655	1.5034	1.5353	14.9584	14.6483	1.5487	19.0107	18.6230	5.6936		
JAPAN YEN	1.7131	0.3233	0.3302	3.2171	3.1504	0.3331	4.0028	4.0052	1.2129		
HOLLAND GUILDER	2.6781	0.5855	0.5182	5.0292	4.9249	0.5207	6.2571	6.2613	1.9200		
ITALY LIRA	11.2520	2.1226	2.1688	21.1299	20.8819	2.1978	26.3891	26.3805	7.9620		
BELGIUM FRANC	49.0014	9.2483	8.4449	92.0190	90.1117	9.5289	114.4870	114.5626	34.6900		
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	2.2416	0.4231	0.4321	4.2095	4.1222	0.4358	5.2373	5.2407	1.6000		
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	4.0019	0.7553	0.7713	7.5150	7.3592	0.7780	9.3499	9.3591	2.8330		
CYPRUS POUND	2.9782	0.5432	0.5546	5.4050	5.2900	0.5586	6.7247	6.7292	2.0370		
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	16.7175	3.1552	3.2223	31.3936	30.7429	3.2592	39.0528	39.0610	11.0300		
CANADA DOLLAR	2.1797	0.4114	0.4201	4.0932	4.0083	0.4208	5.0926	5.0959	1.5400		
EURO	1.2071	0.2279	0.2327	2.2658	2.2198	0.2347	2.8203	2.8221	0.8500		

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN											
CURRENCY	UNIT	1 JORDAN DINAR	1 JORDAN DINAR	1 JORDAN DINAR	1 JORDAN DINAR	1 JORDAN DINAR	1 JORDAN DINAR	1 JORDAN DINAR	1 JORDAN DINAR	1 JORDAN DINAR	1 JORDAN DINAR
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.6571	0.5945	0.7218	0.1773	0.8245	0.5274	0.8107	1.1701		
BRITISH STERLING	0.6035	1.0000	0.5588	0.4356	0.1070	0.4975	0.3183	0.6272	0.7801		
GERMAN MARK	1.6272	2.7872	1.0000	1.2410	0.2882	1.3068	0.8871	1.0100	1.2880		
SWITZERLAND FRA	1.3655	2.2958	0.8237	1.0000	0.2457	1.1423	0.7307	0.8278	1.0212		
FRANCE FRANC	5.9366	9.3454	3.3529	4.0704	1.0000	4.6497	2.9743	33.8979	6.5988		
JAPAN YEN	121.2900	200.9897	72.1106	87.5424	21.5088	1.0000	63.6861	729.0377	141.9244		
HOLLAND GUILDER	1.8961	3.1420	1.1273	1.3985	0.3582	1.0000	11.0000	11.3999	22.1900		
SWEDEN KRONA	7.9655	13.2011	4.7285	5.7408	1.4126	6.5681	4.2015	47.8858	9.2129		
ITALY LIRA	16.6370	27.5893	9.8912	12.0079	2.9500	13.7167	8.7743	1.0000	19.4500		
BELGIUM FRANC	34.6900	57.4898	20.5200	25.0401	6.1517	28.8033	20.5200	20.5200	40.5000		
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	1.5870	2.6289	0.9435	1.1455	0.2814	1.3085	0.8370	0.9393	1.1700		
GREEK DRACHMA	2.8333	4.8951	1.6845	2.0450	0.5024	2.3330	1.4943	17.0301	3.3100		
CYPRUS POUND	2.0378	3.3788	1.2115	1.4708	0.3613	1.6801	1.0747	12.2486	2.3400		
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	11.8360	19.6134	7.0389	8.5428	2.0887	9.7584	5.2423	71.4028	13.8400		
CANADA DOLLAR	1.5432	2.5972	0.9176	1.1138	0.2736	1.2723	0.8139	9.2757	1.8800		
EURO	0.8546	1.4182	0.5081	0.6188	0.1515	0.7046	0.4507	5.1369	1.0000		

WORLD STOCK MARKETS											
STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST CLOSE	CHANGE	PRECIOUS METALS	METAL	ASK	BID			
FRANKFURT	DAX	6662.78	4768.58	-109.80	GOLD	329.00	329.40				
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	9721.33	8651.83	-130.60	SILVER	5.00	5.00				
LONDON	FT-100	5432.30	5432.30	-1.80	PLATINUM	337.50	339.50				
NEW YORK	DJ IND.	8863.50	8863.50	-33.90							
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	557.42	559.14	-1.72							
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	655.09	655.09	-1.02							
NEW YORK	S&P 500	1128.24	1128.24	-1.56							
TOKYO	NIKKEI-225	14428.02	14428.02	-319.50							
PARIS	CAC 40	3554.74	3554.74	-40.94							
FRANKFURT	COMMERZBANK	4376.70	4440.00	-63.30							

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Sleep outdoors
- Like Nash's lama
- Regions
- Cam's brother
- S. American rodent
- Classic violin
- Deported
- Fond coating
- At no time
- Icelandic sagas
- Felicity
- Sweet after you eat
- Edgar Allan and others
- Caps ending?
- Gear teeth
- Jackie's second husband
- "Tosca" and "Carmen"
- Arcane
- Part in a play
- Mrs. Nixon
- Conservative
- Uninvited partygoers
- Indian princes
- Farm layer
- Acress
- McClurg
- Nürnberg
- Cherrystone, e.g.
- Lecherous
- Laughier and gaby
- Exxon rival
- Type of committee
- Personal perception
- Dead Sea kingdom
- Tuscarora city
- maier
- Goose on Oahu
- Winter Madame de
- More limited in quantity

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Food industries ask government to stop flow of imported product in order to survive

**** A NUMBER** of industrialists in the Zarqa governorate have asked to government to intervene and rescue the Jordanian food industries from the unfair competition posed by similar imported products. In a memorandum they submitted to the Zarqa Chamber of Industry, the industrialists said their firms were threatened by closure.

Thabet Wir, the chamber's vice president, said food products were entering the Kingdom through official and unofficial channels leaving negative effects on Jordanian food industries. Such a situation deprives the state treasury from revenue and exposes the health of citizens to dangers because it is not possible to control all imported foodstuffs to ensure they meet health conditions.

Wir indicated that many products and goods are entering the market through official means at very competitive prices "aiming at destroying industries producing similar products." He expressed hope that the Ministry of Industry and Trade would respond to the existing problems and that the prime minister would also respond to the contents of the memorandum presented to him.

A number of industrialists emphasised that the deteriorating conditions of their industries threaten the national capital. They said: "For a year or so, food industries were gradually harmed as a result of the imbalance between imports and local production." The industrialists stressed that food industries were forced to lay off about 50 per cent of their staff and that thousands more will face the same fate if the situation remains the same.

The industrialists said their firms were

now operating at 20 per cent of production capacity stressing that huge volumes of processed food enter the Jordanian market unofficially. They requested the government to reconsider the prices of wheat and flour due to lower international prices of these products. The industrialists said the lower prices would cut their production costs and provide them with an incentive to continue. They also emphasised the importance of exempting products and goods for children from the sales tax.

In the memorandum, signed by 19 industrialists and presented to the prime minister, the industrialists wrote: "We, owners of specialised food industries and investors in biscuit, chocolate, sweets, juice and chips industries, have never witnessed a sharp decline and dangerous drop in the marketing field as in these days of recession." They said that despite the high quality which equals similar foreign products, they were facing many hurdles and barriers. The industrialists listed the following five demands in their memorandum:

- 1) Banning the entry of food products by unofficial means.
- 2) Putting a balanced price for similar products which enter the market at dumping prices.
- 3) Excluding food items which are subsidised in the country of origin from the lists of exemptions when signing bilateral agreements.
- 4) Exempting food products made primarily for children from the sales tax.
- 5) Exempting all production inputs related to food industries from customs (Al Dustour).

AFM stays dull on Iraq worries, foreign sales

AMMAN (R) — Jordanian shares closed mixed Wednesday in thin trade dominated by some local activity on Arab Bank and persistent foreign selling of Jordan Phosphate Mines, dealers said.

The official 60-share index rose a modest 0.06 per cent to 160.61 points in turnover worth JD623,637 (\$879,000).

The index was still close to a 16-month low it hit on Tuesday triggered by across the board losses fuelled mainly by local selling.

Overall listing shares outnumbered gainers by 15 to eleven. Market mainstay Arab Bank closed unchanged at JD205 in mainly locally driven trading, helping to support the official index. Brokers cited worries over raised tensions in neighbouring Iraq, the country's main trading partner, and continued sell-offs by international investors behind the poor performance of the bourse.

Investor sentiment was hit by another day of foreign selling on Jordan Phosphate Mines which closed 0.01 per cent lower to JD1.5 in the largest transactions of the day worth JD223,887, alone accounting for nearly a third of total volume.

The blue-chip mining stock led declines of most industrial blue-chips in limited transactions ex-

cuted by local floor traders, dealers said. Jordan Petroleum Refinery shed JD0.01 to JD10.25 but Arab Potash rose JD0.05 to JD3.35 in two bloc trades worth JD48,084.

In banks, Housing Bank closed JD0.02 higher to JD2.72 in thin volume worth only JD29,521. The independent Pearl Index of 45 best-performing shares shed 0.07 per

cent to 77.12 points, 8.44 per cent down from the start of the year.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You're finishing up a complicated project and making sure everything is perfect. That's important in all concerned. If this is a gift, you want it to be the nicest one you could possibly make. If you continue to focus on the others instead of yourself, you'll find the task easier.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Jupiter is giving direct today. That will make it easier for you to enrol other people in helping with your schemes. And you've got some pretty nice ones. You may be a little shy about discussing them, but they're in your heart. Go ahead and tell them what you're up to.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You continue to disrupt your environment. You're not muddying your own waters, though. You're actually clearing things up. The overall intention is to have a place where you can relax, and you'll have that done by tomorrow, right? Tomorrow is going to be an excellent day for romance.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You're strong, intelligent and good looking, and adamant that others are taken care of. You're going to become successful beyond your wildest dreams, but you're not even thinking about that. Your mind is on other people. Well, that helps them notice you, and what they notice is that you're awesome. Keep up the good work.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Your luck is iffy today. Be a little cautious, especially where money is concerned. You tend to get reckless and spend more than you make, and that's definitely a possibility today. You've got a vision for the future, but how you're going to get there may be a little foggy. Don't waste money on a big purchase now.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You're still pushing to make things come out just right, and you may be ruffling a few feathers. But after the dust settles, people will have to concede you were correct. Your passion for perfection right now is pushing others to try things they would be inclined to avoid. Congratulations!

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You're really up against it now. There

may be changes going on, but the most noticeable one for you requires self-discipline, sticking to your schedule, and doing it on purpose. You might feel like somebody else is making you do this, but that's just because you forgot that you're the one who set the scheme up in the first place.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You are an absolute joy and inspiration today. People are eager to do your bidding, since they believe so strongly in your objectives. Make sure you let them know how you want the job done and the results you have in mind. If it's a healing and nurturing intention, which it probably is, you'll have no trouble enlisting volunteers.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Your luck is not that great today. It's going to take perseverance to achieve your objective, and a bit of creativity. Don't rely on anything else to make what you want happen. You're going to have to make up a schedule and stick to it. If you can manage to take this advice, you'll be amazed at the results.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) The person who knows the answer to the puzzle today isn't telling, but you can figure it out. Then you'll know what needs to be done next, and you can teach the others. It seems that a door that was previously locked shut has recently swung open. The answer is something you've tried before with no success. Try it again.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Details are the most important things in your life today, and there are plenty of them. All you have to do is figure out which ones are important. A source of funding you thought was dried up will start generating again. Ask someone where you were previously turned down. You could get a much better answer this time.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You've completed a lot of old projects during the last few weeks, but now Jupiter, your ruling planet, is going direct, and it's time to start looking towards the future. Don't worry. There's nothing special you have to do. This is going to happen naturally. Just go with the flow.

Gulf shuttle airline to be set up in Bahrain

MANAMA (AFP) — A new Bahrain-based airline is being set up, with an initial capital of between \$10 and \$15 million, to serve both sides of the Gulf, a Bahraini newspaper has said. The Gulf Daily News said talks on the shuttle airline, which could be named Gulf Express, took place in Bahrain last month.

It would initially serve Sharjah, in the United Arab Emirates, Iran and the eastern province of Saudi Arabia. "The shuttle service will assist Bahrain as a hub and also provide an alternative in some cases. A deadline of 1999 has been set," an unnamed source told the paper.



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AB	205.000	205.000	0.00%
JNB	1.800	1.800	-5.00%
MEB	1.000	0.970	-3.00%
OL	1.440	1.420	-1.39%
IB	2.700	2.720	+0.74%
JKB	1.870	1.890	+1.07%
JGB	0.840	0.860	+2.38%
JIB	1.510	1.530	+1.32%
PB	0.680	0.660	-2.94%

BANKS INDEX 268.090 POINT = -0.06%

INSURANCE

JFI	2.700	2.750	+1.85%
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INSURANCE INDEX 125.680 POINT = +0.23%

SERVICES

JEP	1.410	1.410	0.00%
JE	1.500	1.530	+2.00%
AEI	0.840	0.810	-3.57%
AEI	1.860	1.860	0.00%

SERVICES INDEX 101.680 POINT = -0.11%

INDUSTRY

JPMC	1.060	1.050	-0.94%
AP	3.300	3.350	+1.52%
JPC	10.200	10.250	+0.49%
JCA	1.840	1.850	+0.54%
JPM	2.500	2.490	-0.40%
JTC	1.070	1.080	+0.93%
NSI	0.460	0.470	+2.17%
MECEE	0.520	0.520	0.00%
CE	0.830	0.840	+1.20%
AKAL	1.750	1.710	-2.29%
LEP	0.370	0.370	0.00%
JPC	0.300	0.290	-3.33%
JCI	1.050	1.000	-4.76%
JCWMC	0.640	0.640	0.00%
JSC	0.350	0.330	-5.71%
ACPC	1.150	1.150	0.00%
EL ZAY	1.100	1.100	0.00%
UMI	0.580	0.590	+1.72%
JIK	0.350	0.370	+5.71%
JNC	0.590	0.590	0.00%
NAI	0.650	0.660	+1.54%

INDUSTRY INDEX 69.870 POINT = +0.46%

PARALLEL

CGTS	0.290	0.280	-3.45%
UTC	0.590	0.590	0.00%
AL EKHAL	0.720	0.720	0.00%
DAWLAH	0.560	0.560	0.00%
ADT	0.390	0.390	0.00%
READY MIX	0.760	0.760	0.00%
AMICO	0.250	0.240	-4.00%
NTPI	0.230	0.220	-4.35%
MEPC190	0.480	0.480	0.00%
UTCI	2.260	2.260	0.00%
AL RAZI	0.580	0.560	-3.45%
DEI	0.210	0.210	0.00%
INPC	0.540	0.540	0.00%

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Your workload continues to be demanding and mistakes are likely to creep in. Don't take them personally. Although you insist on having everything perfect, you must allow for changes and modifications as you go along. Don't bear yourself up if things aren't right the first time through. Just put in the correction.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Romance again is very important in your life. This could be tricky, since you have other matters you should be paying attention to. Make sure nothing important gets ignored while you're thinking about your personal life. That could be a bigger problem later than the game you're playing now.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) There are changes affecting your home, your relationship and your career. If you've been thinking about relocating, this would be the time for it. It looks like there's a big shift in how others see you and how you see yourself. That's because you're getting stronger. Make sure this happens by focusing on your subjective.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Not only are you tuned in to details today, you're also tuned in to what other people need. That's one of your areas of expertise anyway, but today you'll be so sensitive, so caring, so intent on serving others, you could even get a promotion out of the deal. For you, it'll be fun, but for others, it'll be miraculous.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Finances are again the major theme. You'll be in a position to wheel and deal and possibly make quite a bit. You'll also be tempted to spend quite a bit. That's always a problem you face. You like to be surrounded by the best, and the best is usually expensive. Today, make it your objective to end up with a profit.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You're on a roll, and you might be a little difficult for others to be around. You're critical and outspoken. The other part of this equation is that you're also most likely right. Just remember to be compassionate as you coach the others to improve their performance. If they'll just do as you say, your team is going to win big.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You're still hassling

everything, and some of the things on your list don't need to be done anyway.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Start off the day by getting organised. You need a schedule, and a team. The challenges you'll be facing are too big to handle by yourself. Besides, it wouldn't be nearly as much fun. Figure out who you'd like to play with and ask them to join you. They'll be delighted, once they realise how important your project is.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Staying organised is generally one of the most difficult tasks for Sagittarians to master. But if you can do it, you'll be amazed. Your life's difficult spots will become ridiculously easy. Something you thought would drive you crazy turns out to be amusing. That's your challenge for today. Have a great time while you're at it.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) There's confusion going on, but it's not in your head. It's the other people who don't know what to do next. You should be able to figure out a course of action easily. Then just let the others know. It's no mistake that you're so often chosen for positions of leadership. You're a natural for the job, especially today.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) The studying you're doing today and tomorrow has to do with finances. You'd rather have the money take care of itself and simply show up when it's needed. This is possible, but to make it happen, you're going to have to do a little homework. That's your assignment for today.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Looks like there are still more details to be dealt with. Well, guess what? You don't have to do this all by yourself. Delegate some organisational tasks to a person who's good at that, then just do as you're told. This is a brilliant way to stay in control, while appearing to give control to somebody else. Relax and enjoy it.

with the small stuff and trying to maintain your perspective. Toss out what's unnecessary and focus on what is. That's always difficult for you, but today you'll have to make it a priority. You simply can't do the things on your list don't need to be done anyway.

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World Cup strike earns Iran star national service exemption

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Litings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies



LOCAL SPORTS NEWS

Committee to oversee women's weightlifting team

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan Weightlifting Federation President Ibrahim Harb Wednesday assigned Federation Secretary General Azam Zoubi to form a women's committee to oversee the women's national weightlifting team. The federation has decided to hold a training course for weightlifting coaches.

Yarmouk seminar discusses performance enhancing drugs

AMMAN (J.T.) — A public awareness seminar on the dangers of performance enhancing drugs was held at the Yarmouk University. The workshop lectures touched upon topics such as the negative effects of drug on the health and psychological well-being of athletes. The seminar stressed the importance of raising public awareness among young generations regarding the issue.

Chess team to leave for Qatar

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Royal Chess Federation Wednesday formed its team to participate in the Arab Chess Clubs Tournament which will be held in Qatar. The delegation consists of Ibrahim Klub as head of the team, Ahmad Samhuri and Samir Himsawi as players. Another team was formed to participate in similar event in Morocco.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

North Korea Asiad team cut in half

TOKYO (AFP) — North Korea has virtually halved the number of its competitors bound for the Bangkok Asian Games next month, a top Korean sports official said here Wednesday.

The famine-hit hardline communist state, preparing for its first Asian Games in eight years, will be represented by only 210 athletes from an original squad of 400.

"Various severe factors may have been taken into consideration," said Kim Yong-Gin, vice president of the Korean Amateur Athletic Association in Japan.

"They will charge 50 dollars a day at the athletes' village. But I don't know whether this has influenced the decision," he added.

After sending 446 athletes to the Beijing Games, finishing fourth in the overall medal standings, North Korea skipped the 1994 Asian Games in Hiroshima amid a worsening in relations with Japan. But it took part in the Summer Olympics in 1992 and 1996.

The country's main hopes of gold centre on weightlifting, judo, shooting and wrestling.

Kum regretted the North Korean men's basketball team had withdrawn from the event.

"I don't know what has happened and I regret it because we have great interest in the team which may include Ri Myong-Hun."

It was at the 1990 Beijing Games that Ri, who is listed by the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's tallest man at 2.34 metres (7ft8), made his international basketball debut.

North Korea will be making its first appearance in a men's international football event since it took part in the final Asian zone qualifying round in October 1993 at Doha, Qatar, for the 1994 World Cup finals in the United States.

Jordan among 39 countries confirmed for Asian Games

By Aileen Bannayan

AMMAN — The Kingdom is among thirty nine countries that have confirmed participation at the Asian Games in Thailand next month, organisers said Wednesday.

Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) vice-chairman Mouaffaq Al Fawwaz announced Jordan's delegation, which includes 19 officials and 37 athletes, will be competing in 11 events.

Jordan will be taking part in athletics, boxing, bowling, gymnastics, judo, karate, shooting, squash, swimming, weightlifting and taekwondo in the Dec. 6-20 event.

Fawwaz noted that the Asian Games would be one of the most valuable chances to assess teams prior to the Pan-Arab Games that will be held in Amman Aug. 15-31, 1999.

Among the Kingdom's most popular sports missing the event are soccer,

and basketball. Both federations have recently had their share of controversial issues to deal with which had a negative effect on the game. The basketball board recently declined participation after the federation's resignation which led to the freezing of all basketball activities (see separate story on page 10).

Jordan's delegation includes medal winners headed by Mohammad Abu Khadijeh, one of the country's leading sportsmen having won two gold medals at the 8th Pan-Arab Games and Jordan's only gold at the 18th Arab Boxing Championships which concluded in Tunisia recently.

The delegation also includes Pan-Arab Games boxing gold medal winner Basel Hindawi, judo's silver medalist Musa Khalaf, swimming's bronze medalist Hana Majaj, and weightlifting's Ayed Khawaldeh who became the first Jordanian to win three

bronze medals in any event.

The athletics team includes Fakhreddin Foad — a gold medalist in the high jump; Butheina Mahsiri who won bronze in karate; taekwondo gold medalist Hussein Taleh, silver medalist Mohammad Abul Ruz and Ibrahim Aqel and women's team silver medalists Zaha Talhoumi, Nancy Hindi, and bronze medalist Ahlam Bino.

AFP reported that Games advisory committee chairman Admiral Surawut Maharom said Yemen, Tajikistan and Palestine were the only states left to confirm their participation and warned that any delays could threaten the smooth running of the event.

Officials have tried to shrug off fears that Asia's financial crisis would overshadow the event but several competing nations have been forced to scale down their teams, blaming economic turmoil.

Jordan's delegation to the Asian Games

Jawdat Abdul Mun'em Head of delegation
Mohammad Darwish Deputy head of delegation
Aref Ishaghar official
Three reporters
Dr. Mohammad Abu Ein

• Athletics
Abbas Aziz (coach)
Taleb Rousan (official)
Mohammad Mutari (800m, 1,500m)
Muhammad Ayed (400m, 800m)
Tareq Najjar (shot put, discus)
Fakhreddin Foad (high jump)
Shadi Qa'qour (100, 200, 400m)
Mohammad Abdul Baqi (triple jump, long jump)

• Boxing
Maytham Amer (coach)
Ayman Abdul Hamid (60 kilograms)
Basel Hindawi (over 91 kilograms)
Mohammad Abu Khadijeh (over 91 kilograms)

• Bowling
Mohammad Masri

• Gymnastics
Jian Hwang (Coach)
Ahmad Abdo
Shadi Khouri

• Judo
Anatoli Kalinsky (coach)
Tawfiq Suleiman (66-73 kilograms)
Mousa Khalaf (73-81 kilograms)
Rami Dasouqi (60-66 kilograms)

• Karate
Ahmad Mutaw'e (coach)

Khalil Farran (under 65 kilograms)
Butheina Saleh (over 60 kilograms)

• Shooting
Aysar Hayari
Mazen Khatib
Nizar Madi
Mohammad Hiyari

• Squash
Wael Tabbalat (coach)
Saa'd Hijazi
Mohammad Saeed
Majd Njada

• Swimming
Ali Nawwas (coach)
Hana Majaj (100, 200, butterfly)

• Weightlifting
Shong fu Dong (coach)
Ayed Khawaldeh (under 56 kilograms)
Awad Aboudi (over 105 kilograms)

• Taekwondo
2 coaches, 1 official
Zaha Talhoumi (under 47 kilograms)
Aliyasar Matar (47-51 kilograms)
Ahlam Bino (51-55 kilograms)
Nancy Hindi (56 kilograms)
Luma Abu Judum (55-59 kilograms)
Ala' Kitket (63-67 kilograms)
Mohammad Hamed (54 kilograms)
Ali Asmar (54-58 kilograms)
Mohammad Abul Ruz (62-67 kilograms)
Mohammad Farajeh (72-78 kilograms)
Hussein Taleh (78-84 kilograms)
Ibrahim Kamal (84 kilograms)

Donovan Bailey 'out for up to eight months'

TORONTO (AFP) — Olympic sprint champion Donovan Bailey, who ruptured his Achilles tendon in September, could be sidelined for up to eight months, according to media reports on Tuesday.

The Toronto Star, quoting medical sources, said the Canadian was currently training in a swimming pool to avoid putting too much pressure on his leg and was likely to need between six to eight months before running again.

Anthony Galea said: "I won't let him go back earlier than that. I want his recovery over 100 per cent, so that he's not just running but running world-class."

Bailey came to the fore by depositing Britain's Linford Christie in winning the 1995 world championship title, then breaking the world record by taking the 100m Olympic title in Atlanta.

He was beaten by his great rival Maurice Greene of the United States, however, at the world championships in Athens last year.



Liverpool's English international Michael Owen (R) slips past Tottenham Hotspurs' John Seales during the Worthington Cup match at Anfield Road in Liverpool. Tottenham defeated Liverpool 3-1 (AP photo)

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Pierce in Australian hardcourts

GOLD COAST (AFP) — Former Australian Open champion Mary Pierce was Wednesday confirmed as the top seed for January's \$170,000 Australian women's hardcourt tennis championship here. Pierce, ranked seventh in the world, will compete against World No. 10 Pany Schnyder of Switzerland and top 20 players, Romanian Irina Spirlea and defending champion Ai Sugiyama of Japan. The tournament, which runs from January 3-9, features 17 of the top 50 women's players with Monica Seles another possible as her Australian coach Gavin Hopper is based on the Gold Coast.

Kopke wants to leave Marseille

MARSEILLE (AFP) — Veteran keeper Andreas Kopke said Wednesday he wants to quit Marseille after falling out with coach Roland Courbis. The 36-year-old German is at odds with Courbis over his selection policy and their relationship worsened last Friday when a heated exchange followed Courbis's decision to use Stephane Porato against Monaco.

"With Roland Courbis extending his contract for another season I have to leave as soon as possible. I'm waiting for a club to show interest in me to give a new direction to my career," he said. "I will continue to come to training in respect of my contract," added Kopke who is due to meet Marseille President Jean-Michel Roussier Wednesday. Directors at the club, which extended its unbeaten run in the French league to six on Tuesday, have made it clear they will not battle to keep him aboard.

Pearce ban appeal rejected

NEWCASTLE (AFP) — Newcastle United defender Stuart Pearce failed Tuesday in his bid to have his sending-off against West Ham United overturned. The 36-year-old former England full-back contested his dismissal by referee Graham Poll for a challenge on Trevor Sinclair, submitting a video and written account in support of his claim. But the Football Association has turned down the appeal, saying the matter does not warrant further investigation. The decision means Pearce will now sit out three matches.

Japanese Asian Games competitor fails drug test

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan on Wednesday became the latest nation to report a drug failure among its Asian Games hopefuls when a 58-year-old snooker player tested positive for anabolic steroids.

The Japanese Olympic Committee (JOC) said Junzuke Inoue, set to be the oldest Japanese competitor at Bangkok, would be banned for two years from any JOC-sanctioned event.

All 635 Japanese athletes bound for Bangkok underwent doping tests on October 1 and traces of methyltestosterone, a male hormone with similar effects to testosterone, were found in Inoue's urine sample, the JOC said.

The drug cost Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson his 100-metre gold medal and world record at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. Inoue admitted he had taken the product to enhance his energy level. "He admitted having taken an over-the-counter drug. It may be attributed to his carelessness," said Takashi Kawahara, who heads the JOC anti-doping committee.

He added, "It may be ascribed to a lack of awareness about doping but, in any case, we will have to make efforts to enlighten athletes."

Snooker, making its debut at the Asian Games, is notorious for the use of beta blocker-type drugs to counter nerves.

Teruji Kokage, who heads the Japanese delegation to Bangkok, said he regretted that a drug cheat was discovered. "We will fight with utmost care to produce no offender from our top competitors."

Kokage said Inoue would not be replaced on the billiard team. Last week, South Korea banned a swimmer and two gymnasts from the Games, which start December 6, after they tested positive for banned diuretics often used to control weight.

Inoue's case was the second serious doping incident involving a Japanese.

In May 1996, male sprinter Yoshitaka Ito was banned for four years by the International Amateur Athletic Federation after testing positive for methyltestosterone.

It denied taking the substance knowingly. In another doping case, a high level of testosterone was detected in a Japanese player at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. But it was determined later by another test that the male hormone was naturally produced.

In 1995, Izumi Maki tested positive for the diuretic furosemide when she won the Sapporo half-marathon. She claimed to have used a cold treatment which might have contained the drug but was stripped of the victory and banned for three months.

On the occasion of H. M. King Hussein's birthday

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Arab states prefer diplomacy in Iraq crisis

DOHA (R) — Arab states would prefer a diplomatic solution to the latest crisis with Iraq over U.N. weapons inspections, the foreign ministers of Egypt and Saudi Arabia said on Wednesday.

"In general our stress is on a political and diplomatic solution," Egypt's Amr Musa told reporters when asked about the Arab stance towards possible U.S. military strikes on Iraq. "We are going to discuss the Iraqi crisis tonight," he said as foreign ministers from Syria, Egypt and the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council gathered in Doha for a two-day meeting.

The GCC comprises Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman.

The eight states meeting in Doha signed the Damascus Declaration to boost cooperation in defence and other areas after the Gulf war in 1991 which ejected Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

They were to start talks later on Wednesday amid the new crisis between the United Nations and Iraq after Baghdad decided to halt cooperation with the U.N. Special Commission overseeing the dismantling of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

"We are for a diplomatic and political solution and we are against making any problems in the Arab world because we are not in need of such problems," Saudi Arabia's Prince Saud Al Faisal said on arrival. "We advise Iraq to accept international resolutions of the Security Council so that they can have everything they ask for," he added.

In Cairo, Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak was also quoted as saying the Arab World wanted a non-military solution.

"As far as I know, there is no one single Arab country that supports the use of force against Iraq," the government daily Al Ahran Al Masa'i quoted him as saying.

The United States, with Britain's backing, has said it is ready to use force if Iraq does not back down. A U.S. defence official said Washington was sending additional warplanes to the region as part of a build-up of its forces.

The United States has said it expects to receive all the support it needs in dealing with Iraq. The United Nations withdrew its staff from Baghdad on Wednesday, and the United States authorised the departure of its non-essential embassy staff and dependants from Kuwait and Israel.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israeli warplanes raid Hizbollah positions

BEIRUT (AFP) — Israeli warplanes staged dawn raids against suspected positions of the Iranian-backed Hizbollah group in southern Lebanon on Wednesday, police said. Israeli fighter-bombers carried out four strikes with air-to-ground missiles against Hizbollah positions in the Iqlim Al Touffah hills, a Hizbollah stronghold, police said. There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties.

Hizbollah says 1,200 members killed

BEIRUT (AFP) — The leader of Lebanon's Hizbollah guerrilla movement said Wednesday that about 1,200 members have died since the group began fighting Israeli forces in south Lebanon in 1982. Hizbollah Secretary General Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah gave the number of "martyrs" since the unleashing of the resistance against Israeli occupation during a ceremony marking the 16th anniversary of the first Hizbollah suicide attack against Israel.

Pom replaces BBC news

GENEVA (R) — Satellite television viewers in Europe have been seeing naked women rather than their favourite news readers when tuning in to the British Broadcasting Corporation's said World Service this week. The frequency normally bringing in the BBC's 24-hour news service was apparently switched by accident to a network called the Eros Channel. In mid-afternoon, Eros was carrying advertisements for the services of ladies with names like "Chloe of Capetown" and giving their phone numbers. But by mid-evening, the programming grew hotter ... There was no immediate explanation from satellite service providers in Switzerland.

Tenet threatened resignation over Pollard

NEW YORK (R) — U.S. CIA Director George Tenet threatened to resign, if convicted spy Jonathan Jay Pollard was released as part of last month's Middle East peace deal, a published report said on Tuesday. The New York Times, citing Clinton administration officials, said Tenet gave his warning to U.S. President Bill Clinton after learning that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made Pollard's case a key bargaining point at the U.S.-brokered peace talks at Wye Mills.

Prince Charles website a hit with surfers

LONDON (R) — The launch of Prince Charles' website on Wednesday proved to be a huge success on the Internet with 1.75 million hits recorded in its first 24 hours. The heir to the throne, who celebrates his 50th birthday next week, attracted reactions from web surfers as far afield as Australia and the United States for his views on everything from architecture to agriculture. "This site provides us a powerful way of getting across — in an unfiltered way — information about the prince to people across the world," a spokesman said. The 354-page site — <http://www.princeofwales.gov.uk> — is directly linked to the Buckingham Palace website which attracted more than 100 million hits in its first year.

'Pregnancy may make women smarter'

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Hormones released during pregnancy and nursing enrich parts of the mother's brain involved in learning and memory, a study of animals suggests. The findings, released Tuesday at a Society for Neuroscience meeting, may help in understanding the effects that higher hormone levels have on the brain during childbearing. The results of the study of mice, however, are inconsistent with research at the University of Southern California indicating that pregnant women perform poorly on cognitive tests designed to test memory, perceptual speed and learning ability. Some researchers have attributed feelings of fuzzy-mindedness among many expectant mothers to emotional stress from pregnancy, which provokes higher levels of a hormone called cortisol that interferes with memory.

Threats prompt papers to abandon sex ads

ATHENS (AP) — Most Greek newspapers left out ads for phone sex lines and escorts Wednesday after authorities threatened prosecution for notices deemed linked to prostitution. At least one newspaper, the Athens daily Apoyevmatini, defied the ban and ran over 150 ads. The paper called the threats of prosecution a blow to press freedom. Many daily newspapers usually carry several pages of ads for escorts, phone sex lines and massages. Athens' chief prosecutor Tuesday sent an order to police demanding the arrest of the publisher and editor of any newspaper that prints advertisements encouraging "another's vice."

Star watchers set for fireworks from comet

CAPE TOWN (R) — Star gazers could be in for a spectacular stellar fireworks show next week when the earth passes through the tail of the comet Tempel-Puttle. South African astronomers said on Wednesday, "We pass through the comet's path every year. But this year it should be far better than usual because Tempel-Puttle rounded the sun in February." Case Rijkdijk of Cape Town University's observatory told Reuters. "When the comet last rounded the sun in 1966 there were spectacular shows," he added.

Talabani assures Turkey he will fight PKK

ANKARA (AFP) — Iraqi Kurd Leader Jalal Talabani assured Turkey Wednesday that his Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) will guarantee the security of their border and fight rebel Turkish Kurds.

"We are going to ensure the border's security. That will keep Turkish troops from launching incursions into northern Iraq," Talabani said at a news conference.

"We also recognise Turkey's right to defend itself," he added. Turkish troops last week began a new offensive into northern Iraq against the rebel Kurdistan Labour Party (PKK), which has maintained rear bases in the area since 1991.

"We will resort to any means necessary to fight the PKK in the areas that we control," Talabani said.

Talabani has sought to reassure Turkey in recent days of his group's desire to oppose the PKK in northern Iraq, which the PUK and rival Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) have controlled in defiance of Baghdad since the 1991 Gulf war.

Turkey had accused the PUK of backing the rebels while the KDP has helped Ankara combat the PKK since May 1997.

On Tuesday, Turkish Vice Premier Bulent Ecevit accused Iraq of increasing its support for the rebels and warned that Ankara was ready to take measures to protect its security.



FATEH DEMONSTRATION: Masked Palestinian activists of the mainstream Fateh faction line up with their mock assault rifles during a rally held in the Al Najah University to show support for Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Wednesday. The rally was held to mark the tenth anniversary of Arafat's declaration of independence, which he made on November 15, 1988 in Algiers (Reuters photo)

Israeli university students block Jerusalem roads in tuition protest

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Hundreds of Israeli university students blocked major roads in Jerusalem Wednesday after talks with the government on their demands for tuition fee cuts broke down.

The students, going into the fourth week of a class boycott, stopped traffic on a main route leading into Jerusalem and tried to bar roads near Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's residence and a major shopping mall, witnesses said.

The demonstrations erupted after talks between student

leaders and Netanyahu's chief of staff, Moshe Leon, failed to resolve the dispute over tuition fees at state universities and students' living conditions.

Dozens of students had been arrested in earlier street protests and about 80 demonstrators launched a hunger strike Monday outside Netanyahu's home.

Israel Radio said one hunger striker collapsed late Tuesday and was taken to hospital.

Netanyahu had remained largely silent on the protest

until the hunger strike began on Monday, when he appointed Leon to seek a solution to the dispute.

After a series of meetings, Leon declared Wednesday that he was breaking off the talks, calling the student demands "entirely unrealistic."

Students said Leon had accepted their suggestion that tuition fees be cut by half if students participate in some "voluntary work" but then backed off.

The students are demanding that Netanyahu deal with their

demands directly. Labour Party leader Ehud Barak also called on Netanyahu to deal personally with the matter.

"I am calling on the prime minister to take the matter into his own hands. This is not a matter for Leon, but for the prime minister himself," he said.

Strikers have criticised the government for allocating large portions of the state budget to religious schools and Jewish settlers in the West Bank instead of investing in state education.

Taliban ask Iran to stop returning refugees

ISLAMABAD (R) — The Taliban militia asked Iran on Wednesday to stop sending Afghan refugees back and urged the United Nations to provide food and shelter for those who had arrived in Afghanistan, an Afghan news service reported.

The Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press quoted Taliban spokesman Wakil Ahmad as saying that thousands of Afghan refugees in neighbouring Iran were being sent back.

"Every day hundreds of Afghan refugees are being removed from Iran," Ahmad said. "We want Iran and the United Nations to stop that process."

"But if this process continues then we want the United Nations to provide food and shelter to these refugees, otherwise, if arrangements are not made then there is a fear that thousands of these refugees will die."

The Taliban and Iran have been locked in a war of words since the Taliban admitted that Iranian officials had been killed by "maverick" Taliban fighters when the Islamic militia overran the opposition stronghold of Mazar-e-Sharif in August.

It accuses Iran of arming and training opposition groups contesting its 90 per cent control of the country. Ahmad said the refugees were returning to Nimroz and Herat provinces in Afghanistan but the Taliban did not have the resources to provide food and shelter to these people. The total number of Afghan refugees in Iran was not immediately known but after the former Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan in 1979 millions of Afghans left the country and took refuge in neighbouring Pakistan or Iran.

Islamists take control of Nazareth council

NAZARETH (AFP) — Violence flared in the town where Jesus Christ spent his childhood as Islamist candidates won control of Nazareth's council in municipal elections whose results were announced on Wednesday.

Youths supporting defeated Islamist mayoral challenger Salman Abu Ahmad stormed the offices of the victorious Christian incumbent, Ramiz Jeraisi, and fought with supporters of his secular Arab Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash) early Wednesday, witnesses said.

Although Jeraisi retained his post with 52 per cent of the vote, his party lost ground in the council, with Islamist candidates winning 10 of the body's 19 seats, sources in the town said. One Hadash youth was

stabbed in the foot with a knife during fighting at Jeraisi's offices after the results were announced, witnesses said.

Turnout in the town was around 85 per cent of the 39,000 eligible voters, sources at the municipality said on Wednesday.

Before the election, Jeraisi's Hadash, which has controlled city politics for 23 years, held 11 seats on the 19-member council, against five for Abu Ahmad's United Nazareth List and other Islamic groups, and three for independents. After Tuesday's election, Hadash was left with nine seats and all the independents and smaller parties were ejected.

Abu Ahmad had accused Jeraisi of fomenting discord by stressing the city's Christian heritage.

Parapsychology 'healers' thriving in Iraq

BAGHDAD (AP) — Sabah Kamadja repairs washing machines by day. On three evenings a week, he treats the sick in a downtown church with his supposedly special psychic powers.

On a recent night, Kamadja moved his hands slowly above the head and stomach of a young woman on a bed. With his piercing blue eyes squinting, he explained her problem to a visitor: "She is losing her hair."

Kamadja is one of dozens of unlicensed healers who have surfaced as Iraq's public health care has deteriorated and private care has become too expensive for many. The new brand of practitioners call themselves masters of electromagnetic fields or parapsychologists.

The phenomenon is debated in newspapers and on talk shows. The weekly Alif Ba ran a cartoon of a parapsychologist's office with a sign saying "paralooty" — "looty" is Iraqi slang for swindler. A psychology professor even approached President Saddam Hussein to urge the government step in to regulate the practice.

Ignoring critics who denounce the healers as quacks, Iraqis are flock-

ing to the "blessed hands" for relief from disorders ranging from cancer and blindness to arthritis and acne.

The healers' reputations spread by word of mouth, often based on outrageous claims. One story making the rounds claimed the first lady in an Arab country sent 15 blind men to one healer, himself blind, and he cured them all.

Sometimes receiving up to 60 patients a day, the healers are raking in bundles of money, but still charge less than conventional doctors.

Regular clinics charge 2,000 dinars (\$1.60) a visit — half a government employee's monthly salary. Pay scales have never been adjusted to the deep depreciation of the dinar caused by U.N. economic sanctions imposed on Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait eight years ago.

Most of the healers take 1,000 dinars (80 cents) a session. And no medicines are required. A very few, like Kamadja the washing machine repairman, do not charge at all.

Another reason people are going to healers is that the regular health system has collapsed. Iraq has blamed thousands of deaths on

shortages of medicine under the U.N. sanctions. The sanctions ban the free export of oil, Iraq's most valuable commodity, and have devastated the economy.

At Hareth Hassan, a British-educated professor of psychology at Baghdad University, calls the trend toward paranormal medicine backward. He said he suggested to "upper circles" — meaning Saddam — that the healers be regulated.

Hassan, who heads the Iraqi Parapsychologist Society, the only such group in the Arab World, doesn't say all the healers are fakes.

He wants their abilities to be tested and suggests those who are found effective — a very few, he believes — be employed as aides in state-run hospitals.

As it is, he said, the deteriorating economic situation has created a market for people "who abuse the simpletons who want to get better." He said there are 400 healers practising in Baghdad alone.

Several healers said they detect a person's illness by using their hands as scanners to sense a gap in the "halo" surrounding everyone's body. Then, they say, they focus electromagnetic powers to heal.

Jagger opposed to daughter's catwalk career

LONDON (AFP) — Rolling Stones singer Mick Jagger does not want his 14-year-old daughter to take up modelling and thinks she should concentrate on her studies, his wife top model Jerry Hall says in the December issue of Harpers and Queen magazine. "He wants Elizabeth to concentrate on her schoolwork and says it is really silly as she doesn't need the money," Hall said. Elizabeth who is tall and blond like her mother, has already modelled clothes for Thierry Mugler and Vivienne Westwood. Hall did not appear to share her husband's misgivings about the world of modelling and its association with compulsive slimming, anorexia and sometimes drug abuse.

Christo to spruce up oil tank

OSERHAUSEN (AP) — Christo, the artist who wrapped the Reichstag in silvery fabric, said Tuesday he will return to Germany to spruce up an enormous pre-war oil tank with colourful barrels. The artist and his wife, Jeanne-Claude, plan to bisect a 110-metre-high tank built in 1929 with a wall of painted barrels. The project, called "The Wall," is to open April 30 with a \$6 entrance fee. "We want to create a friendly contrast with the colourful barrel-wall to the gloomy, depressing oil tank," Christo said. The couple's wrapping of the Reichstag drew enormous crowds in 1995.

Diana memorial will not fund mine removal

LONDON (AP) — Princess Diana's memorial says it will help victims of land mines but will not pay to have the devices removed. The fund said in a statement Tuesday that the \$1.7 million it has available for the cause would cover just a fraction of the cost of removing mines. It said the money should instead be used to help victims. Diana drew attention to the issue when she walked through a minefield in Angola in 1997. The fund's decision dismayed one group involved in clearing mines. "We face the ludicrous situation of the Diana memorial fund doing nothing to help a cause to which she gave a very clear and very important commitment," said Lou McGrath, director of the Mines Advisory Group.

DiCaprio silms down for upcoming role

NEW YORK (AP) — HF, fortunes rose with "Titanic" but will Leonardo DiCaprio be too pudgy to make it on "The Beach"? The heartthrob has put on 10 kilograms, thanks to a combination of junk food, nightclubbing and a knee operation that kept him out of the gym, the New York Post reported Tuesday. The extra weight has Danny Boyle, director of DiCaprio's next movie, a little worried. The Post said DiCaprio is due to start shooting "The Beach" in January. His \$20 million starring role will require him to spend a lot of time in bathing suits and shorts. DiCaprio is now reportedly on a stringent diet and has scaled back the party life in an effort to fit the part.

Joe Camel goes on trial

WASHINGTON (AP) — A tune driven by a bluesy harmonica rang out at the Federal Trade Commission on Tuesday as testimony began in the trial of Joe Camel, the cartoon character accused of enticing minors to smoke. Government lawyers spent hours showing an administrative law judge just how prevalent R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.'s Joe Camel advertising campaign was in the United States, with dozens of items stamped with the cartoon.

12/12/98